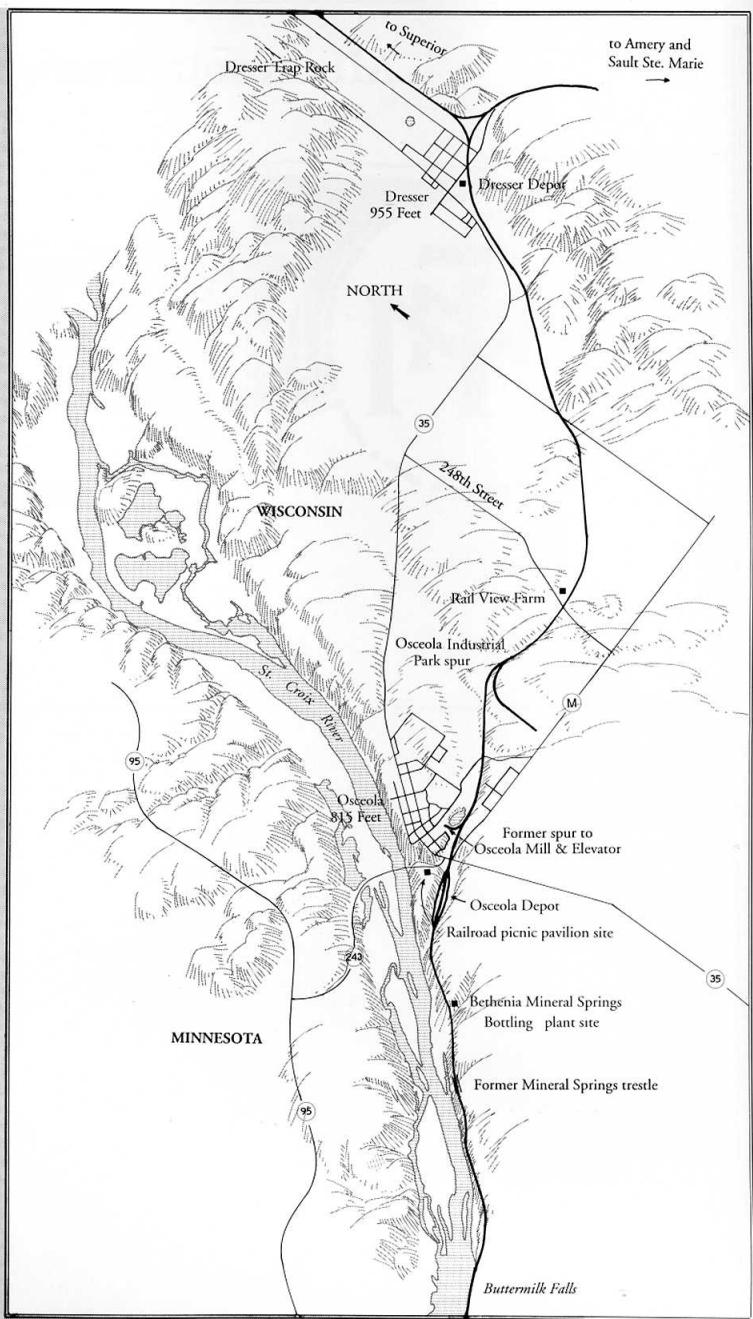
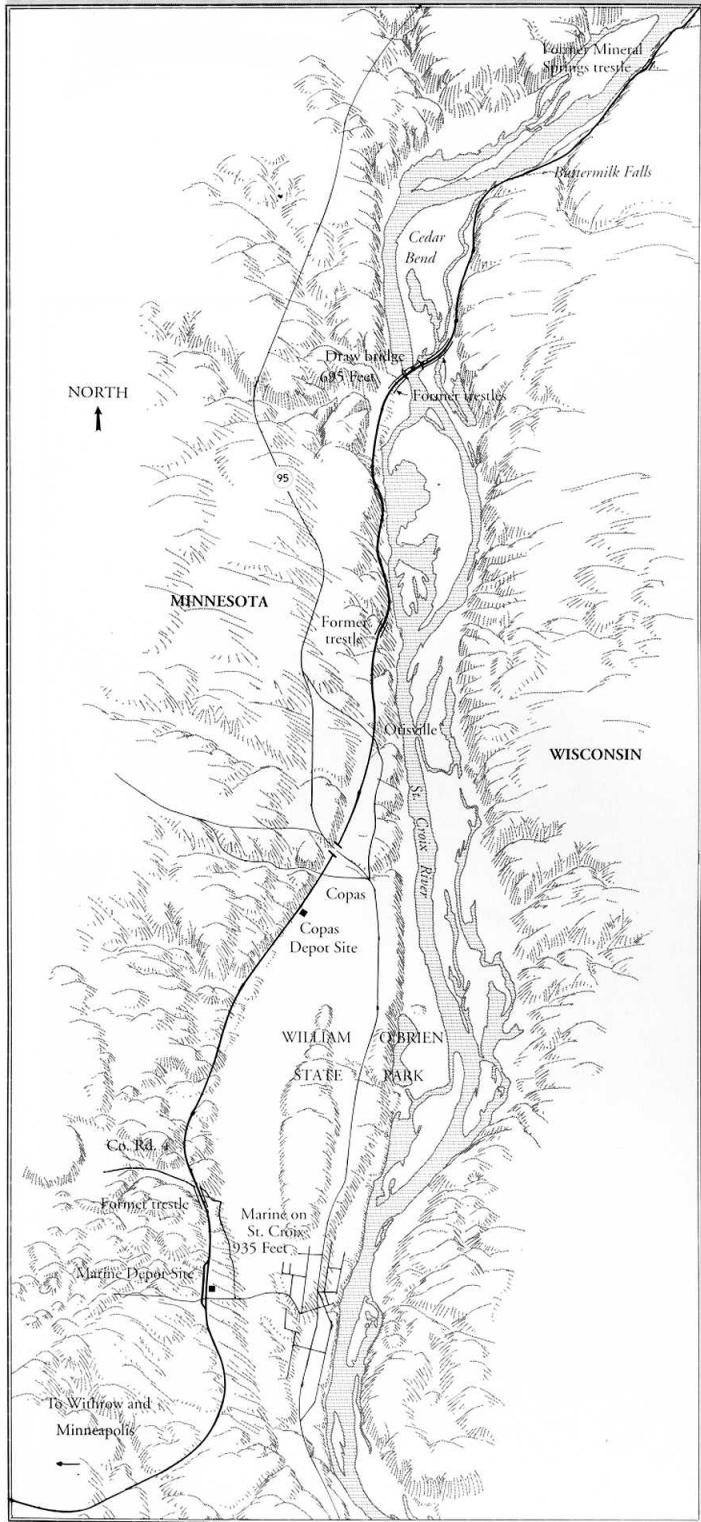
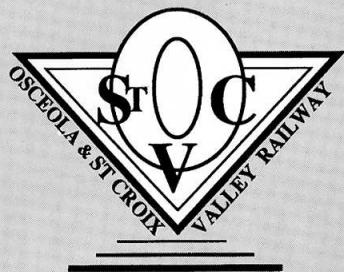


Minnesota Transportation Museum



Winter 1993







## MINNEGAZETTE MINNESOTA TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM, INC.

P.O. Box 1796, Pioneer Station  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1796

### EDITORIAL STAFF

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**Sandra Bergman** .....Production Editor  
**Alan Jensen** .....Circulation

### CIRCULATION

The *MinneGazette* is published quarterly by the Minnesota Transportation Museum, Inc., and is mailed to members in good standing without charge under Third Class postal permit. Members may request First Class Mailing for an additional \$5 per year charge.

### SUBMISSIONS

The *MinneGazette* welcomes submissions for publication of articles, photos and other illustrative materials of historical or current interest relating to transportation in the Upper Midwest. No payment is made, and publication is at the editor's discretion.

### MUSEUM PURPOSE

The Museum is a non-profit educational corporation organized in Minnesota in 1962 to acquire, preserve, restore and operate historic Minnesota public transportation artifacts. It operates the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line and the Minnehaha Depot in Minneapolis, the Jackson Street Roundhouse in St. Paul, the Osceola & St. Croix Valley Ry. in Osceola and the Steamboat Minnehaha restoration in Excelsior.

### MEMBERSHIPS

Individual	\$ 25	Family	\$ 30
Sustaining	\$ 50	Sponsor	\$ 100

**Public Information**  
(612) 228-0263

**Member Information Line**  
(612) 228-9412

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman	John Diers
Vice-Chairman	Art Nettis
Secretary	Aaron Isaacs
Director	Richard Fish
Director	Mike Miller
Directors at Large	Art Pew
	Tom Kolar
	Leo Meloche
	Nick Modders

## TREASURE HUNT

We'd like to hear from anyone who can donate any of the following:

-A hydraulic press for moving and installing wheel bearings and bushings.

-Large bench vices.

-A plasma arc cutter.

-Caboose-type chemical toilets for the lightweight cars.

-Old railroad books, magazines and collectibles for sale at railroad flea markets.

-Tune-ups for MTM's various automotive equipment.

-Any streetcar boat hardware or furnishings.

-Tarps or plastic sheeting to cover the rolling stock at the arsenal.

-A laser printer for the Editor.

-Sandblasting of railroad equipment.

-Engine oil, batteries and coolant for our diesels.

-Sheet metal and plywood for the PCC restoration.

-Historic train, streetcar and boat pictures for the *MinneGazette*.

Contact the Editor or any Board member if you can help.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

-To **Paul Joyce** for donating his collection of TCRT color slides, TCRT plans and MTM scrapbooks.

-To **George Isaacs, David Ven Huizen, Louis Hoffman, Bill Olsen and John & Helen Palewicz** for their donations to the PCC fund.

-To **James Weist and Elaine Sandin** for their donations to the Railroad Fund.

-To **Richard Kasseth** for his donation of 22 shelving units.

-To the **Lennox Corp.** for its donation of two gas furnaces for the boat building, and to **B & C Heating** for installing them at cost.

-To **Sally Weismann & Tom Amundson** of Golden Harvest Bakery for donating refreshments for the Como-Harriet work crews.

-To **Phil Settergren** of Settergren Hardware for his periodic donations of hardware items to Como-Harriet.

To the **Railway Mail Service Gun Club** for its donation toward the reprinting of the NP #1102 brochure.

-To **Bill Fellinger** for his donation of a 20-foot 1965 Carver boat with tandem axle trailer.

-To **Haig Halebian** for his donation of a 17-foot 1954 Chris Craft Sportsman with trailer.

-To **Harold Richter** for donating a TCRT winter weight conductor's jacket owned by his father, **Oscar Richter**.

-To **Ellen Kolar** for her donation to commemorate **Tom Kolar's** birthday.

## CORRECTIONS AND NEW INFO

**Jim Kreuzberger** caught several mistakes in the Fall 1992 issue. The photo on the top of page 21 is in Eveleth, not Gilbert. Jim's father was owner/manager of the hotel at that time. It issued the photo as a postcard.

**Helmer Stoner's** almost-derailment on the Woodland line did not take place at 20th Avenue. The correct location is unclear. It may have been where cars turned onto 4th Street at 27th Avenue. Jim comments that at East 4th Street & 24th Avenue, cars derailed at least twice, causing management to hang a cautionary sign from the span wire.

The sepia toned steamboat photos are in reverse order. Look at the wakes in the top photo. The boats are backing away from the dock, not approaching it.

\*\*\*

A Note on page 17 directed readers to New Jersey to obtain TCRT uniform buttons. Not necessary. MTM bought them all and they are available for resale to members. See the Traction Report for details.

\*\*\*

Updating the Red Jacket Trail story, **Leigh Pomeroy** writes that the landowners have decided not to appeal the District Court ruling that allows Blue Earth County to condemn their land for the trail. Barring something unforeseen, this opens the door for construction to start next spring.

**Front Cover:** The Copas depot, shown here circa 1910. Read about its last active years on page 31.  
Minnesota Historical Society collection.

**Inside Front Cover:** This "land form" map follows the Osceola & St. Croix Valley Ry. from Marine to Dresser.  
Drawn by Patti Isaacs.

## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

-John Diers

When I was in school, history books stopped at World War II. We were in the midst of a great industrial age. Progress and prosperity were assured. Together, they would sweep everything away that was old and obsolete, including, unfortunately, much of the stone and steel that was our heritage. Then the 60's came along and we realized that progress came at the price of losing our past. The response was the explosive growth of the historic preservation movement.

Railway and trolley museums are a part of that movement. Some, like Seashore, pre-date it, and, to their credit, inspired the efforts of others to save a part of America's transportation heritage. Today, there are hundreds of groups, not to mention private collectors, involved in railway preservation.

Never before has there been so much preserved, historic "stuff". The Twentieth Century is better documented than any time since our ancestors came out of the caves. The challenge is to make some sense of it.

**John Tuny** is a respected scholar and the Curator of the Baltimore and Ohio Railway Museum. He spoke at the ARM convention which I recently attended. I had an opportunity to visit with him briefly after his speech.

In our chat, he described two hypothetical organizations: One started as a hobby club, organized, perhaps, to save a special locomotive or streetcar. Over time it grew and acquired more equipment, possibly returning some of it to operating condition. The rest of the collection sat rotting, waiting for volunteers and money. The board spent most of its time worrying over what color a particular car or locomotive should be painted. There was an effort at planning, but it quickly dissipated in member squabbles. The other organization had similar beginnings, but it limited its collection to restorable proportions, did some serious planning, professionalized its policy making and management, and learned about marketing.

Which of these two organizations do you think will be around long enough to outlast its founders? Like

an attic, one of them will be emptied when its owners die.

We are the last generation to have any immediate memory of railroading in the steam era, or of the interurban. Who will care when we're gone is problematical. The demographics aren't encouraging. Many museums seem to only draw middle aged volunteers. Yuppies are off doing something else.

It's encouraging to look at MTM, because we've avoided this woeful scenario. We've taken a professional approach to policy making and made solid strides at public information, interpretation, and marketing. Our collection of "stuff" needs some trimming, but at least we are aware of the problem and are motivated to fix it. We know the value of scholarship.

More changes are coming. Hobby club museums have no future, because they lack the resources to compete for funding to preserve collections, to compete for skilled people to maintain them, and to compete for visitors to support them. Government and foundation funding is essential, especially for large railroad operations, which typically have too much infrastructure and equipment to be sustained by volunteers alone.

The museums that survive will have corporate identities with a board, paid staff, and government or foundation support. Volunteers will have a role but it will be more restricted than it is today. That, and the transition to it, will be intriguing and controversial.

Let's all come back in 2015, when age has separated the successes from the failures.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

September 1992

-Accepted the resignation of Tom Mega from the Board and appointed Mike Miller to fill the vacancy.

-Approved the nomination of Nick Modders as Director at Large.

-Changed the bylaws so that new memberships received in the month of September are good for the following year.

-Appointed Marcia Diers to the new position of Public Information Officer.

October 1992

The Board did not meet

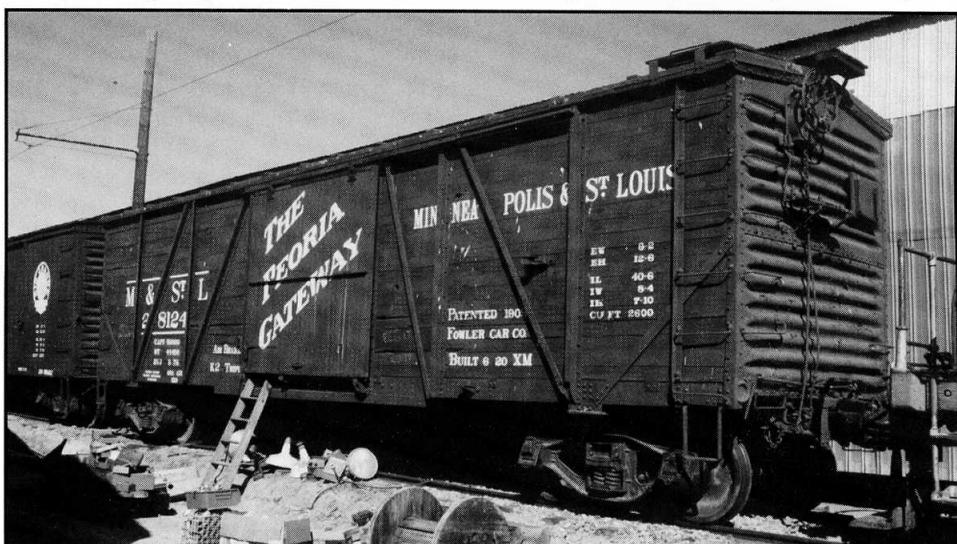
November 1992

-Elected officers for 1993, including Chairman John Diers, Vice Chairman Art Nettis and Secretary Aaron Isaacs. The selection of Treasurer was postponed to December.

-Approved Leo Meloche, Tom Kolar, Art Pew and Nick Modders as Directors at Large.

-Approved Barney Olsen, Ross Hammond and Louis Hoffman as Honorary (non-voting) Directors.

-Approved a draft document that structures the Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway as a separate entity.



The Minne Gazette now has a west coast correspondent, thanks to Benn Coifman attending school at Berkeley. On a visit to the Western Railroad Museum at Rio Vista Jct., he spotted this surprising survivor, an outside braced M&StL wood boxcar, built in 1920. Readers are encouraged to send in photos of wayward preserved Minnesota equipment.

-Approved the appointment of Nick Modders to the O&StCV board.

-Concurred with the O&StCV board nominees chosen by the Osceola Historical Society.

-Authorized Tom Kolar to negotiate an easement by Washington County for a road shoulder safety zone next to the Stillwater & St. Paul at Summit.

-Approved a media relations policy.

December 1992

-Authorized Jean Inselman to enter into an insurance package with the St. Paul Companies.

-Approved the sale of a shoulder easement at Summit to Washington County.

## BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MINNEGAZETTE

-Aaron Isaacs

This is my 11th issue as Editor, and I thought the readers might like to know more about the magazine and how it is produced. While the focus of MTM will always be its operating exhibits, scholarship has its place. The Minnegazette could be called the glue that holds the organization together.

Jim Harrison was the first Editor. He produced the first issue of an unnamed newsletter in December 1967. Except for the first one, I don't have copies of the newsletter. At some point John Stein took over the job. His successor in 1970 was Paul Joyce, who coined the Minnegazette name and created the banner logo that appears on the cover to this day. He also adapted the historic logo of the Minneapolis Threshing Machine Co. to create the MTM logo.

The first Minnegazette appeared in February 1970. Until 1981, six issues per year were printed on inexpensive paper and single stapled in the upper left corner. They averaged about six pages. The primary focus was museum news, although plenty of historic photos were always included. The first historic article was a "biography" of #1300 written by Russ Olson for the July-August 1978 issue.

In 1981, Fred Rhodes upgraded the Minnegazette to a real magazine, with slick paper and the bordered pages that have become its trademark. Size increased to a minimum of twelve pages, with some issues

reaching 28 pages. The first color covers appeared in May/June and July/August 1982. Fred's crowning achievement was the May/June 1984 issue. Commemorating the 30th anniversary of streetcar abandonment, it weighed in at 40 pages and included 60 photos. One of my goals is to reprint it as a CHSL souvenir booklet. A typical issue today is 32 pages and 50 photos.

Under Bill Graham and Jeff Braun the Minnegazette began to shift more toward features and historic photos. Jeff produced the first issue with four-page color covers in 1989.

Up to this point the Editors had done their own layout and production work. As the magazine grew more sophisticated, however, producing six issues per year became too much for a single person to do. In 1988 the Board decided to cut back to a quarterly schedule, with a single sheet newsletter sandwiched between the Minnegazettes.

When I became Editor, I wanted to concentrate on the magazine's content and quality. Doing the layout by myself was painful to contemplate, so I decided to hire a paid Production Editor. Art Nettis recommended a freelancer named Sandra Bergman.

Sandy deserves much of the credit for how the magazine looks today. The Minnegazette has always had a particular style, but Sandy refined it, rooting out all the inconsistencies in typefaces, page and picture borders and spacing. She selected our printer, and works with them from start to finish. A stickler for quality, she spends about 65 hours on each issue.

A typical issue contains 5000-7000 words and about 50 photos. About a third of the space is devoted to MTM news and other small items. News is restricted to the front of the magazine, away from the features and photos. Previously the three had been mixed.

Each issue usually has one or two features or photo stories, followed by a photo section. Photo stories seem to emerge organically from my wanderings through historical societies and personal collections. All it takes are several related photos. Features are much harder. Someone has to do a lot of research. It takes more work to fill a page with text than with pictures. If anyone out there has a story to tell, please give me a call. You don't have to be a writer. I'll take care of that. Features can include personal



Sandy Bergman with F-unit.  
Elaine Silver photo.

memories, stories about other museums, oral history interviews, or anything else that pertains to Minnesota rail or boat history. Please don't be shy.

More than anything, the Minnegazette is known for its historic photos. A typical issue contains about 25 of them. The hard part is finding them. Members are an important source. Please call or write me if you have some to share. If you are an older MTM member, I will be contacting you sooner or later to look at your collection. Better yet, call me at 929-7066. My big concern is that you may die and your collection will be scattered or destroyed.

I try for a good mix of photo subjects in each issue, with something for steam, diesel, traction and steamboat buffs. Being located in the Twin Cities, it isn't always easy to find outstate material, but I try for a balance.

When the steamboat was added to the museum, it presented some editorial dilemmas. How would the rail buffs feel about boat pictures? Would the boat buffs feel like token members? Should the boat coverage be restricted to the streetcar boats and Lake Minnetonka, or should it venture into riverboats and Lake Superior? If you have an opinion on any of these issues, let me know.

Whatever the subject, the Minnegazette's photos are selected for interest and impact. A successful photo should draw you into it and convey what life was like back then. That means showing people and places, as well as equipment. I confess to not getting very excited about roster shots, unless the piece of equipment is rare, or beautifully photographed.

Sandy and I are always experimenting with new techniques. The sepia toned boat shots in the Fall

issue are duotones- two half tones of the same photo in two different colors. Duotones can also be done in gray. They cost more, but you get a greater range of shades.

Minnegazettes are scheduled for mailing around the 20th of January, April, July and October. The deadline for submissions is about the 1st of December, March, June and September, although small changes can be made for several weeks thereafter.

I enter it all into the Mac and give a disk to Sandy, along with an outline of what goes where and how the photos should be sized and cropped. Using Quark XPress soft-ware, she does a rough layout. Since we try to keep it at 32 pages, it's usually either over or under, and we spend two or three more sessions reworking the layout.

Sandy takes the final product to Quality Quick Print in Minnetonka. They usually have about two weeks to print it. The normal run is 1000 copies, of which about 100 are sent free to public officials, railroad officials and anyone else whom MTM would like to cultivate.

Al Jensen is in charge of the stuffing crew, which usually meets in the lunchroom of MTC's Heywood office on a Saturday. Al tends to recruit from the streetcar roster, but if you want your issue early, please give him a call. Regular stuffers include Loren Martin, John Kennedy, George Isaacs, Russ Olson, Norm Podas, Hilmar Wagner and Barb Paul. Al has managed to learn the arcane rules of third class bulk mailing that bring the cost down to about 11 cents per copy. He runs the finished product to the bulk mail center the following Monday. Given the vagaries of third class, they get delivered anywhere from three days to two weeks later.

Most of your member dues pay for the Minnegazette. Dues total about \$16,000 per year. It costs about \$14,000 (\$3.50 per copy) to produce and mail four issues of the Minnegazette, plus \$400 for the Microgazette and \$800 for the membership directory. A four-page color cover adds about \$2000 to the cost of an issue, which is why there may not be one this year. Incidentally, the rest of the dues money pays for the annual election, membership meetings, membership cards, and miscellaneous items like office supplies.

#### MINNEGAZETTE EDITORS

<b>Jim Harrison</b>	1967-?
<b>John Stein</b>	?-1970
<b>Paul Joyce</b>	1970-1977, 1978
<b>Gordon Frederick</b>	1977-1978
<b>Russell Olson</b>	1978-1979
<b>Fred Rhodes</b>	1979-1985
<b>Bill Graham</b>	1985-1988
<b>Jeff Braun</b>	1988-1990
<b>Aaron Isaacs</b>	1990-

#### 1992 ARM CONVENTION

**-Louis Hoffman**

MTM was well represented at the 1992 Association of Railway Museums (ARM) convention. Joining me were John and Marcia Diers, Art Nettis and Mike Buck. It was hosted by the National Capitol Trolley Museum (NCTM) in Wheaton, MD, just north of Washington, DC.

The theme of the conference was "Focus on Museum Practices". On October 31st eight seminars were offered. We were able to attend seven of them. I'll report on four in this issue. Mike will cover the others in the Spring issue.

The first was "Public Relations and Special Events Planning for the Small Museum", presented by Wesley Paulson, NCTM's Supt. of Public Relations. His four main points were to:

1. Use special events to connect to local residents. The Traction Division open house, the annual participation in the Linden Hills fair and the Steamboat party at the Lafayette Club are good examples. The bad example is Stillwater, where we never got involved with the community and had no real support when we needed it.

2. Once they are in the door, make sure the conditions for volunteers are friendly and interactive. Make sure their surroundings, the equipment, buildings and grounds are neat, clean and pleasant. None but the hard core will work for long in the junk yard atmosphere that is typical of too many rail museums.

3. Know your market. NCTM, like MTM, attracts families with small children. Give them a reason to keep coming back. At Lake Harriet, there are families who ride weekly or more. Some have become members and even volunteers.

4. Be a museum. Remember that, although a visit should be fun, there's something to be learned.

In order to get the message out, Paulson recommended developing connections to media personalities who can get air or press time.

The second seminar, "Docent Training: Building an Effective Cadre of Railway Museum Interpreters", was presented by NCTM's Curator, Ken Rucker. He stressed the importance of creating an experience and involving the volunteers in recreating the historic roles that people played. Where the display is static, the role of the docent is even more crucial. The important goal is balance—we need to relate our own large knowledge to our visitors without overkill. Most visitors don't need or want to know the technical details of when a car was built, etc. But they do want to know that TCRT was once the region's largest employer, and that you could once board a train in Osceola and go all the way to Montreal and Boston.

The third seminar, "How to Write a Collections Policy", was presented by Melissa Marsh-Heaug. She posed four questions for a museum to answer.

1. What is the museum's purpose?
2. What time period is to be covered?
3. What kinds of objects are to be collected.
4. How are the objects to be displayed?

There are secondary issues that are part of creating a collections policy. Who makes the decisions and how? Why and how are objects retained or disposed of? Should a museum accept loaned objects and how should they be handled? How to organize and care for the collection? When one tries to apply these questions to MTM, it becomes clear that we do not have a collection policy.

John and I presented the fourth seminar, entitled, "A Tale of Two Railroads—Getting Along with Neighbors". We gave an overview of MTM, and discussed our positive experience at Lake Harriet and our negative experience at Stillwater. Then we talked about how these lessons were applied to the startup at Osceola. They are summarized in ten key points:



Those windows don't clean themselves, you know. Fred Rhodes, Terry Warner and John Allison do the necessary chores on #1300. Louis Hoffman photo.

1. Be a part of the community  
Know key people in local government and civic groups.
2. Make your operation part of the community's history.  
Railroads never existed in isolation.
3. Be thoroughly familiar with all applicable laws, ordinances and regulations. Scrupulously observe them.
4. Be positive. Never criticize other people or organizations in the community even though they may not be supportive of you. You may need their support on another issue in the future.
5. Retain good legal counsel. Follow his/her advice.
6. Be a good neighbor. Never assume that everybody loves trains.
7. Hold public meetings. Share your plans with the community and establish a local advisory committee.
8. Have a policy for media contacts. Designate a spokesperson.

9. Be sure that members involved in operations know how to meet and greet the public. Train them.
10. Establish a conduct code for members. Enforce it.

All work and no play make for dull conventions. We spent one day riding and running much of NCTM's operating fleet. These include a Johnstown, PA car, a Third Avenue Railway (NY) car, eight cars from D.C. Transit, which had maintained its own historic collection, and five European cars.

The one mile line runs through a scenic wooded area of the Northwest Branch Regional Park. Built new for the museum, it features steep grades, sharp curves and turning loops at each end.

The convention drew to a close with the annual meeting. I was elected to one of the five seats on the Board of Directors, the first time MTM has been so represented. The other seats are held by people from the Railroad Museum of New England, Orange Empire Railway Museum, Illinois Railway Museum and Pennsylvania Trolley Museum.

## TRACTION REPORT

-Louis Hoffman

### 1992 Ridership Strong Despite Weather

Despite a cool summer with much rain, the total passenger count was 47,235, down from the 1991 near record of 51,520, but still above average. The total for 22 seasons is 972,239. That means the one millionth passenger will ride the Como-Harriet line in 1993.

#### 1992 CHSL Ridership

	Regular	Charter	Total
May	4,771	99	4,870
June	10,803	579	11,382
July	12,433	1,215	13,648
August	11,121	505	11,626
Sept./Oct.	2,161	0	2,161
Total	44,740	2495	47,235

### Those Who Made It Happen

How did we carry all those people? The season ran from May 16th through November 1st, 127 operating days. 89 members ran the cars and staffed the depot. They worked a total of 2071 hours including:

Hours	Activities
1667	Regular operations
72	Charter operations
283	In the depot
49	In revenue training

Here are the top operating crew members by hours of service.

Total Hours (40 or more)
Earl Anderson 65.5
Harold Dalland 57.0
John Prestholdt 55.5
Mike Buck 54.5
Karl Jones 53.5
Lyndon Benson 43.5
Louis Hoffman 41.0
Dave Barnett 40.5
Kathy Prestholdt 40.0

Regular Operations (35 or more)
Earl Anderson 65.5
Karl Jones 53.5
John Prestholdt 51.0
Harold Dalland 42.5
Lyndon Benson 39.5
Dave Barnett 38.0
Kathy Prestholdt 36.5
Mike Buck 36.0

## Charter Operations (15 or more)

Roy Harvey	18.5
Harold Dalland	14.5

## Depot Agent (15 or more)

Betteye Anderson	37.5
Terry Warner	18.0
Mike Buck	17.5

Of course, operations would be impossible but for the behind-the-scenes work of the Engineering, Mechanical, and Safety & Training departments. 60 hours went into non-revenue training, 42 by Supt. Karl Jones. Another 265 hours were spent on Saturday morning track crews. Finally, through June 30 only, 956 hours were spent on all other Engineering and Mechanical Dept. projects by 22 people. Five people accounted for nearly three quarters of that time: Roy Harvey-283, George Isaacs-159, Mike Buck-155, Ray Bowlan-82 and Loren Martin-75. That means that 1221 total hours were put into the maintenance of physical plant and equipment.

Thanks to John Prestholdt for gathering these numbers. Thanks to those of you named in this article for volunteering above and beyond the call of duty. Finally, a special thanks to everyone who contributed their time during the 1992 season.

## 1993 Traction Survey on the Way

By the time you read this, the 1992 Traction Survey will be on its way or already in your mailbox. Please join us for 1993. Please remember the deadline, too—we need your responses on-time.

As always, operators are needed. We always need streetcar cleaners as well. Cleaning crews meet once per month on a Saturday morning and are done by noon. As an extra incentive, donuts are always served at cleaning parties.

We did a good job staffing the depot in 1992, but more agents are needed. It takes no training and allows the division to sell the wider variety of souvenir items available only when the depot is open. If each of the active volunteers took just one shift per summer, we'd cover the schedule and then some.

Charter service foremen and operators are sorely needed. The charter burden has fallen on too few shoulders. If you're free during the

day or have a flexible schedule, please volunteer. If we had more volunteers, we could greatly expand our business.

If you didn't receive a survey, or want more info on the '93 training program, call Karl Jones at 924-0890. If you have any questions about CHSL volunteer activities, please call me at 729-0442.

## Charter Changes Coming in 1993

1993 will see new faces and charter procedures. Wanda Sims, the Jackson Street building manager, will assume the scheduling and administrative duties previously handled by Pat Harvey and Ione Gordon. Thank you to Pat and Ione for their many years of service. The new charter information and reservation number will be the Jackson Street Office telephone, 291-7588.

There will be new procedures to ease the burden on the charter crews. Charters will run on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays only. This will minimize the switching of cars by charter crews. Charters will be scheduled closer together so that multiple trips can be handled by a single crew in an uninterrupted shift.

Although the restricted days may hurt business, we must avoid "burn out" by our small cadre of volunteers. However, Operations Supt. Al Jensen will have the authority to schedule trips on other days.

## #265 Featured in MHS Display

The new Minnesota History Center features a photo exhibit on historic buildings and sites entitled "Saving Places". Among them is a picture of #265 proceeding north from the carbarn to 42nd Street. Roy Harvey appears to be at the controls.

## Minnehaha Depot Now Part of Traction Division

For years the Minnehaha Depot has been run almost single-handedly by Corbin Kidder, who put in three quarters of the 1992 agent shifts himself. The Board has decided to move the depot into the Traction Division to take advantage of its established member survey, crew calling and large roster. Persons interested in volunteering should so indicate on their 1993 Traction Survey, or call Corbin at 227-5171.

## New Premiums for PCC Fund Donors

We now have even more premiums to entice you to give to the PCC Fund. Steven Kieffer's 1958 booklet, "Transit in the Twins", is a history of TCRT complete with photos and maps. Because it was sponsored by the evil Ossanna management, it touts the superiority of buses over streetcars (which we



Rust never sleeps. The metal under the PCC's headlight wings, rubrail and trolley base is badly corroded. George Isaacs photo.

## PCC PROGRESS REPORT

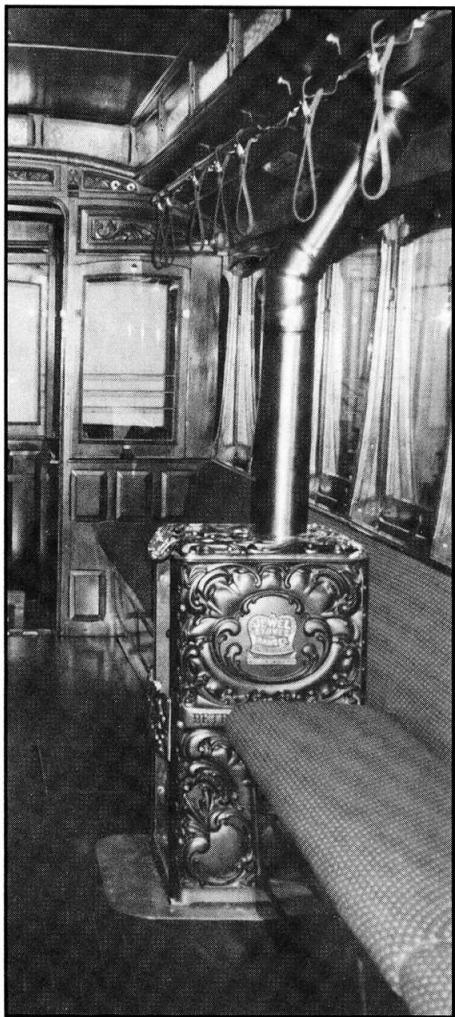
-George Isaacs

If you consider the removal of parts, corroded sheet metal and lots of rust progress, then the dedicated crews at the MTC Overhaul Base and Linden Hills carbarn are moving right along.

We are now concentrating on removing corroded metal sections in the vicinity of the trolley base boards and the upper side panels. This will enable us to treat all rusted surfaces to stop further corrosion and then replace sheet metal. All this work must be finished before we raise the body from the trucks to deal with the underframe and the corroded lower side panels.

As we remove parts from the PCC they are brought out to Lake Harriet to be cleaned, repaired and otherwise made ready for reinstallation. The Wednesday night crews have been made up of Ray Bowlan, Dewey Hassig, Roy Harvey, Loren Martin, Bill Olsen, John Prestholdt, Larry Schreiber, Walt Strobel, Hilmar Wagner, Lowell Wood, George Wold and yours truly.

If you are interested in working on the PCC, please call me at 484-7512 so I can schedule you.



The ornate Jewel streetcar stove has been installed in #78.  
Louis Hoffman photo.

know not to be true), but it is still a "must have". A limited number are available for a \$25.00 donation.

Also new are genuine Twin City Lines uniform buttons that MTM has obtained from a New Jersey collector. He had bought the stock of a Philadelphia tailor who had a TCRT uniform contract. The last Minnegazette wrongly reported that the buttons were available from the collector. Large buttons are available for \$5.00 each or five for \$20.00. Small buttons cost \$2.50 each or five for \$10.00. All proceeds go to the PCC Fund.

Other premiums still available include wooden TCRT Entrance/Exit signs for a \$50.00 donation, and a 1950-era TCRT pocket-sized rulebook for a \$25.00 donation.

Mail checks to: MTM, PCC Fund, 4707 Lyndale Avenue N., Minneapolis MN 55430.

## STEAMBOAT REPORT

## Boat Building Now Heated

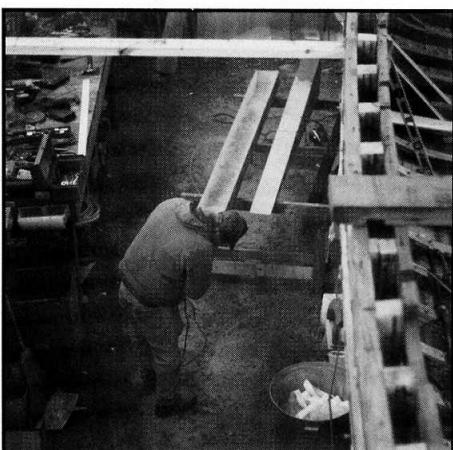
The boat building is now insulated and heated. The South Shore Lions Club helped clear the walls and install wall and ceiling insulation. Lennox Corp. donated two gas furnaces and B & C Heating installed them at cost. Gas service was installed on November 2nd.

## More Media Coverage

The steamboat restoration has received some high profile media coverage lately. On November 1st, the Star-Tribune ran a story with a photo on the front page of the Variety section. Another story appeared on November 20th. KTCA Channel 2's Venture North program included a 10 minute segment on the boat that aired on Saturday November 21st. The ongoing coverage by the Excelsior Sun-Sailor continued with stories on October 14th and 28th.

## Restoration Update

John Moorhead has completed drawings of the propulsion system. He took them with him to California where he discussed them with Chadwell O'Connor, the former owner of our engine. A major point of discussion was the drive train from the engine to the propeller shaft. The Minnehaha originally had a straight drive from the engine through the shaft to the propeller. This required the engine to be canted. An alternative would be to use a flexible thrust bearing. This would permit the engine to be mounted perpendicular



Cliff Brandhorst forming a timber at the boat building. Aaron Isaacs photo.

to the keel. In the end, however, they decided to go with the straight drive.

Another decision involved the propeller. The Minnehaha's original has an 80 inch pitch, which makes it somewhat inefficient, especially for backing the boat. It is also cracked, making it difficult to repair. They decided to use a new propeller with a slightly smaller diameter and a more efficient 54 inch pitch.

Steve Scheftel, a graduate of the Landings School of wooden boat design and building at Kennebunkport, ME, has been retained to create accurate drawings of the Minnehaha. Nick Ruehl of EOS Architecture in Excelsior has offered Steve working space in his office.

The vinegar vat lumber has started to arrive. Half of the 10,000 board feet has been milled to 1 3/4 inches. The rest of the three inch boards will remain unmilled. Interestingly, the vinegar smell is only slight. The lumber turns out to have been of extremely high quality. It is all heart-cut (from the center of the tree only), with no knots and almost a perfectly straight grain. A 40 foot van-type trailer has been donated to store the wood until it is needed. The trailer will be kept at **Fritz Widmer's** in St. Bonifacius. It was Widmer who moved all three of the streetcar bodies.

A planning session was held at **Bob Woodburn's** house on November 21st. Four work teams were organized for this winter, including:

**Stern rebuilding**—headed by **Cliff Brandhorst**.

**Planking**—headed by **Bob Bolles**.

**Bow reconstruction**—headed by **Bob Dumas**.

**Overall project supervision**—headed by **Stan Straley**.

A support services group will help the work teams. The objective is to put the engine, boiler and engine generator into the boat by May 1993. Completed areas of the boat will receive yellow paint. It will be hauled on its trailer to Water Street for exhibit during the Art in the Park festival. There will be scaffolding so the public can look inside.

As this is written, another big planning meeting is scheduled for January 7th at Tow Marine in St. Paul. The detailed boat plans will be reviewed by the Minnehaha board and other active volunteers. The Hennepin County Sheriff's Water Patrol, State of Minnesota Boiler Inspector and the Coast Guard are all invited to attend.

#### More Donations

Two boats with boat trailers have been donated. The first is a 20-foot 1965 Carver with 200 hp Interceptor engine and a tandem axle trailer donated by **Bill Fellinger**. The boat has a broken back, and is therefore of no use to MTM, so it has been donated to Bristol Classics Ltd., who rehab and sell antique and classic watercraft. The trailer, however, is just the right size for the tugboat Toot.

The second boat is a 17-foot 1954 Chris Craft Sportsman with home-made trailer. It was donated by **Haig Halebian**. The boat and trailer will be auctioned off at the next Lafayette Club fund raiser on May 21st.

As people have learned about the Minnehaha restoration, all sorts of unexpected items have surfaced. One of the most remarkable comes from **Willard Hield** of Minneapolis. He read one of the recent Star-Tribune articles on the Minnehaha. It seems that his grandfather, **Willard J. Hield**, was a TCRT executive. His father, **Clifford C. Hield**, was an engineering student at MIT. He chose to do his thesis in 1909 on the streetcar boats. It is entitled "Speed Trials & Service Tests on the Steamboat White Bear".

Amazingly the original document still exists. It is in the possession of **James Freeman Hield** from Lake Ozark, MO. It was loaned to **Leo Meloche**, who made copies. It describes the acceleration and power characteristics of the streetcar boats in exhaustive detail. There are six photos that examine the boat from various angles while out of the water on dollies. A future Minnegazette will summarize the report in greater detail.

#### Streetcar Display Approved

The Excelsior City Council has approved the display of a streetcar body next to the Excelsior Historical Society on Water Street. The Council also approved an operating streetcar line on the old M&StL right of way from Water Street to Minnetonka Blvd. Both items passed unanimously. Because the right of way is owned by Hennepin County and administered by the Parks Dept., their approval is also needed. In any event, there will be no attempt to build a streetcar line until the boat restoration is complete.

Considerable progress has been made on the cars' restoration. **Bob Dumas** has rebuilt and waterproofed the roof of #1496, which had pretty much collapsed. He has put new canvas on the roof of #1809, replaced the folding doors and installed two new stepwells. Storm windows have been mounted all around. **Jim Williams** has been scraping and painting #1809. Much of it has been primed and the front end is ready for a final coat of yellow.

The body of TCRT #1723 was auctioned in November in Lindstrom. **Joel Hutchinson** alerted Leo of the coming sale at the Magnusson Farm. Magnusson, an auctioneer himself,



They may look rough, but real progress has been made toward cosmetically restoring cars #1809 (left) and #1496 (right). Aaron Isaacs photo.

had amassed a large collection of tractors and other machinery. MTM successfully bid \$180 for the body, which had a complete interior in generally good condition. A crew then stripped the body and then hauled away three very large pickup truck loads. They then gave the body to a scrapper who was also at the auction.

### Visiting the Queen

Lake Okoboji in northwestern Iowa has a 75-foot diesel powered excursion boat called the Queen II. It is a replica of the Queen, which operated on the lake from 1884 to 1973. Cliff Brandhorst, Harley Jones, Jim Oglend, and Leo Meloche visited the boat and the Iowa Great Lakes Maritime Museum. They learned some good lessons about static display techniques and excursion revenue potential. A future Minnegazette will run a more detailed article on the Queen II.

## RAILROAD REPORT

### From the Osceola Historical Society

**Linda Jensen Gordon** writes, "From the Osceola Historical Society to the Minnesota Transportation Museum: It has been a great pleasure working with you on the train this first season. Your enthusiasm has spread through the town. It has given us the opportunity to make new friendships. We are looking forward to the '93 season."

### Governor Dedicates the O&StCV

Sunday October 25th was the last day of the first Osceola season, and a fine day it was—50 degrees with bright sun. Wisconsin Central President Ed Burkhardt had arrived that morning on a special train consisting of business cars Prairie Rose and Sierra Hotel, a Burlington Zephyr dome car rebuilt with an open platform. It was the first time a dome had ever traveled the line.

The day's first Marine and Dresser trips ran as usual. For the 2 PM trip, the special was switched into the regular consist. The MTM and WC diesels were doubleheaded (not MU'ed) with #105 leading and took off for Marine.

The plan was to pick up Minnesota



The dedication special passes under Hwy. 95 at Copas on its way to Marine behind double headed (not MU'ed) MTM and WC power. Al Jensen photo.



MTM Chairman John Diers, WC President Ed Burkhardt, Minnesota Lt. Governor Joanell Dyrstad and Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson spoke at the dedication. Aaron Isaacs and Al Jensen photos.



The WC special at Osceola. The Sierra Hotel is the first dome to visit the line.  
Al Jensen photo.

**Lt. Governor Joanel Dyrstad** at Marine and return her to Osceola to meet **Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson**. But she failed to appear, and frantic phone calls couldn't locate her. The train returned to Osceola without her.

Despite her absence, the private cars were full of dignitaries, including **Mayors Ludvigson** of Marine and **Gustafson** of Osceola, **Wisconsin State Representative Harvey Stower**, **Wisconsin State Senator Bill Berndt** and **Dr. Nick Muller**, head of the **Wisconsin Historical Society**. Hors d'oeuvres and beverages were served and spirits were high. This reporter spent the trip in the dome with a camera, documenting why dome cars were such a great idea (see page 16).

We paused just below Osceola. White flags were placed on the engine along with other ornamentation. On cue we whistled into the station as the high school band played.

**John Diers** emceed the dedication ceremonies and a wide variety of speakers waxed rhetorical. **Lt. Governor Dyrstad** arrived just in time. It seems that she had been caught in the jam caused by a bad traffic accident.

**Governor Tommy Thompson** is a big supporter of the Osceola railroad, along with passenger trains in general. He sits on the board of Amtrak. His speech was particularly enthusiastic, stressing the importance of keeping alive the memory of small town depots. You can hear it on **Mike Buck's** new MTM video.

The festivities concluded, and everyone climbed aboard for a free ride back to Marine (the regular Dresser trip was annulled). There the

special train uncoupled and left for Chicago. We returned to Osceola, basking in the glow of it all.

#### Osceola Ridership Encouraging

6439 passengers rode during the seventeen operating days in September and October, an average of 379 per day. The peak day was Sunday October 4th with 740 passengers. To put this in perspective, the four daily trains had a total theoretical capacity of 1128, although the working capacity is closer to 1000.

Marine trips were the most popular, averaging 140 per trip and frequently selling out, while the average Dresser trip carried 65. Sometimes this included the overflow from sold out Marine trips. Following the well known Stillwater pattern, Sundays consistently drew more riders than Saturdays.

Considering that publicity was avoided for the first couple of shakedown weeks, and that no paid

ads were ever purchased in the Twin Cities papers, the ridership has been much higher than expected.

#### Operations Go Smoothly

All the Stillwater experience and the recent training paid off handsomely in Osceola. Apart from the usual first time uncertainties, MTM's crews adapted well. The proof is that most trains ran on-time, a trend that improved as everyone became more used to their new surroundings.

In several ways the Osceola operation is easier on the crews than Stillwater. The workday is about eight hours, compared to about eleven hours for a Stillwater Saturday. This more than offsets the longer drive from the cities. At Stillwater it was necessary to run the engine around the train up to nine times a day. This happens only four times a day at Osceola, although the derail safety devices at each siding make it more complicated.

The Stillwater yard is a hard place to load and unload passengers. The train doors had to be spotted exactly at specially built step boxes. Depending on the number of freight cars in the yard, loading was often restricted to two doors, which slowed everything down. There was always concern about passengers tripping on rails or on the uneven gravel. Many people would cross the tracks to get to and from parking, and this was always a cause for concern during engine runarounds.

In contrast, no one ever needs to cross the tracks at Osceola. The platform is long enough to load five



Little remains at the Marine depot site where #105 runs around its train.  
Aaron Isaacs photo.

cars at a time, which speeds it up greatly. The 19 minutes provided to unload the Marine trip and load the Dresser trip are quite adequate. Also, there is something very appealing about a train that enters the station, loads and unloads passengers, and then continues on its way. Seems more like the real thing somehow.

There are seven public grade crossings at Osceola compared to eight at Stillwater. While this may seem like a wash, Stillwater had more blind crossings, including Hazel Street which required a positive stop and flagging. And none of the Osceola crossings has the combination of high speed and heavy traffic that was present at Manning Avenue.

Its steep grades and sharp curves made the S&StP an operating challenge. To MTM crews, the O&StCV seems level in comparison.

The final advantage of Osceola is that someone else maintains the railroad. Stillwater was hard on volunteers, because problems would occur at all hours. The crossing signal would malfunction or there would be a washout or sun kink. While MTM members still perform and oversee maintenance at Stillwater, the amount of work has dropped off dramatically since the line was downgraded to FRA class one with a top speed of ten mph. Even so, 180 ties were recently replaced on the curve north of Hazel Street. The goal is to shift all maintenance responsibility to the Minnesota Zephyr.



Vicki Jensen aboard #1102.  
Louis Hoffman photo.

#### The Crew Callers Say Thank You

At Stillwater, train crews, ticket agents and coach attendants were each called separately. At Osceola calling is combined, along with the new jobs of parking attendant, platform attendant and track inspector. Morten Jorgensen writes the master schedule. Burt Foster and Marv Mahre call the Minnesota crew members and Perry Carlson calls the Wisconsin members.

Morten writes, "The crew callers did not get the chance to thank everyone who participated in the O&StCV. This issue of the Minnegazette gives us that opportunity. All the crews worked extremely hard and well during this short but hectic season. Teamwork was at its best! All the training has paid off, giving us the background and experience to run. So, once again, thanks to everyone involved. Without all of you, this season would not have been possible.

If you have comments about the

crew scheduling/calling, please contact one of us. We are already preparing for the 1993 season, so your comments are very welcome."

#### This Winter's Work

There's much to do to prepare for next summer's operating season. A top priority will be coach work. Rock Island #2604 saw no service last fall. The foggy lexan windows must be replaced with glass. The proposed solution to its wheel problems is to swap trucks with sister car #2529 that is derelict at the arsenal. Both Rock cars will receive rubber tubular vestibules to permit passengers to safely cross between cars. The end doors are missing some window glass and don't slide smoothly. The vestibule floors need rebuilding. Despite past reupholstery work, there are still seats that have not been recovered. Plans are to repaint the cars in Soo Line maroon, lettered for the O&StCV. Light bulbs will be placed in the empty ceiling fixtures.

Great Northern baggage car #265 will join the operating fleet next year (see separate story). It will replace triple combine #1102, which will spend more of its time as a walk-through display on the Osceola depot siding.

In order to save the considerable cost of a round trip to Jackson Street, the three lightweights are spending the winter at Osceola.

A meeting was held on November 28th to plan a facelift for business car #A-11. There is much interest in selling first class tickets at Osceola, and having a car that can be chartered by private parties. The A-11 is mechanically sound, but it needs a new interior look.

The plan is to repaint the exterior and redecorate the interior. A new restroom will be built in the front of the open lounge area. A bar will be built along the left wall where a bathroom used to be. The lounge will get new paint and carpet. The lounge chairs will either be replaced, or reglued and reupholstered. The compartment, pantry and kitchen in the front half of the car will be thoroughly cleaned and repainted.

Unlike most MTM restorations, this project is not trying for historical authenticity. #A-11 has been rebuilt so often and so extensively



The Soo rock trains run daily during trackwork season. The WC Stevens Point dispatcher staged several well-timed meets, including this one at Dresser.  
Art Nettis photo.

that nothing short of a complete tear down would be needed to return the car to something approximating its original appearance.

After the mechanical work is completed at Jackson Street, the car will be sent to Osceola, where a local crew will take over the cosmetic repairs. The whole job will probably take more than one year to complete. However, the plan is to get #A-11 operating this summer, so it can generate money for its own repairs.

All airbrake equipment has been removed from diesel #105 and shipped to a certified air brake rebuilders. Mechanics from the Soo Line will perform a complete evaluation of all interior components. This will make it possible to decide whether to replace items or continue to maintain them.

## MTM'S OTHER 265

-Paul Dalleska

Members are returning another piece of the museum collection to service. Great Northern baggage car #265 is a product of GN's rebuilding program. Originally a heavyweight car, it was rebuilt into a streamlined baggage car around the late 40's to early 50's. Painted in GN's classic Omaha Orange and Pullman Green for connecting service on the Empire Builder, it later carried Big Sky Blue and Burlington Northern's Cascade Green, traces of which can still be found on the car. Currently it is painted in work train colors for its last service as a tool car for a crane outfit.

Plans for the 265 are to restore the exterior to orange and green. A picture of the 264 can be found on page 53 of Patrick Dorin's *Lines East*. The interior will include gates over the loading doors, racks for 12 bicycles, benches, storage cabinets, and toilets. As of this writing the car has been stripped of all additions and unnecessary parts and work has begun on the floor with the help of Mark Dullinger, Harold Ellingson, Burt Foster, Mort Jorgensen, Richard Kasseth, Paul Spyhalska and others. Because portions of the floor have rotted and BN had drilled a number of holes, the top two layers and part of the sub-floor will have to be replaced. Very little of the car's original interior remains, except for



GN baggage car #265 at Jackson Street. Paul Dalleska photo.

the fish rack flooring and part of the electrical cabinet. The electrical systems need to be rewired, the baggage man's desk needs to be reconstructed, and some of the brake system needs modification for passenger service.

With the return of warm weather next spring work will begin on the exterior. The bottom 12 inches of sheet metal will be removed and replaced due to rust damage. A welder has agreed to help with the metal work. The exterior will be sandblasted and repainted when the bad metal has been replaced.

The 265 will need a large quantity of plywood, tongue and groove flooring, and sheet metal in the early stages of work. The toilets would be a modern system with a holding tank under the car. Donations of materials or money are welcome and any form of help would be greatly appreciated. The work is being done at the Jackson Street Roundhouse. There are projects that could be done at home for those who cannot come down on a regular basis. Work sessions are on most Saturdays. If you are interested in working on the 265 contact me at 638-9815.

## O&STCV TO BECOME SEPARATE ENTITY

-John Diers

The Osceola & St. Croix Valley Ry. is more than just a part of MTM. It is a partnership with the Osceola Historical Society (OHS), several local governments, and the States of Wisconsin and Minnesota. All these parties stand poised to give their support to a recreated historic railroad. What is needed is an entity that can properly receive that support.

To that end the boards of MTM and the OHS have both approved a charter for the railroad. The next step is

incorporation. The result will be a new non-profit organization that will coordinate the activities of all the participating parties. Its board will include representatives of MTM, OHS and the different communities through which the line passes. I will be its first Chair.

There are several reasons why a separate entity is essential. First, the State of Wisconsin is very activist in the area of tourism promotion. It has subsidy and grant programs for such activities as marketing, staff support and equipment restoration. But the state is not about to give this money to an organization with "Minnesota" in its title. Similarly, the village of Osceola is prepared to help the railroad in various ways, but they want, and deserve, an organization with local representation.

One of the ringing lessons of Stillwater is that a museum railroad cannot survive without the support of the community. Creating the separate entity ensures that we won't make the same mistake twice. In contrast, the great success of the O&StCV has been the outpouring of support from all sides. Everyone wants to help.

Think of the possibilities. The historic train, owned by MTM, will arrive at a beautifully restored depot, owned by the Historical Society. It may also call at a reopened Dresser depot staffed by volunteers from that town. The State of Minnesota is interested in a stop that will serve O'Brien State Park. The railroad may be publicized by grant money from the State of Wisconsin. It may store its equipment in buildings erected on land owned by the Village of Osceola. And that is just the beginning.

The bottom line is that the new entity will provide an umbrella for all these partnership contributions. By

harnessing resources outside MTM, we will accomplish our museum's mission—to recreate the railroading of yesteryear for the education and enjoyment of the public.

In my column I talk about the need for museums to grow out of the "hobby club" stage and become professionally run organizations. MTM and its Railroad Division, have been given free first class tickets to the future. All we have to do is climb aboard.

## OSCEOLA DEPOT REPORT

-Mark Balay

**Editor's note:** The Osceola Historical Society has retained MTM member **Mark Balay** as the architect for the depot restoration. His progress reports will be a regular Minnegazette feature.

While the completion of the depot sale is still tied up in governmental red tape, the Historical Society has started a detailed architectural examination of the building, preparation of a restoration plan and project cost estimates. At the present time the depot has no functional lighting, heating or plumbing, and vandals have taken their toll on most of the window glass and furnishings.

Yet, all spaces retain their original configuration, and the finishes and fixtures that remain tell us much about how the depot was first built in 1916.

The first phase of the architectural consultant work is a careful observation and analysis of artifacts, indicators of removed materials and building construction components. **Elmer Johnson**, the last Osceola station agent, is helping to locate and describe the details. Some examples of artifacts are telegraph equipment locations, signal devices, a Fairbanks-Morse freight scale and Canadian Pacific promotional illustrations which once hung in the waiting room. Construction components such as roofing, masonry, interior finishes, wiring and plumbing are all being examined for condition and originality, and to decide whether to repair or replace them. Replicating the fixed awning with its ornately detailed timber brackets and rafters will be the most challenging part of the architectural restoration.

After the sale is completed, upcoming projects will be publicity, restoration by both volunteers and craftsmen, fundraising and material searches. The Historical Society has set a quality level for this project which will meet or exceed the standards for the National Register of Historic Places. Historical context research is underway to support nominations

with the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office and restoration activity projects.

## 4-8-4 COMES TO MINNEAPOLIS

From September 20th through the 24th North Star Rail moved its Milwaukee Road 4-8-4 #261 from Green Bay to its restoration shop at General Electric in north Minneapolis. The move was via Wisconsin Central. Most of the move was at the track speed of 40-45 mph. There were no incidents enroute.

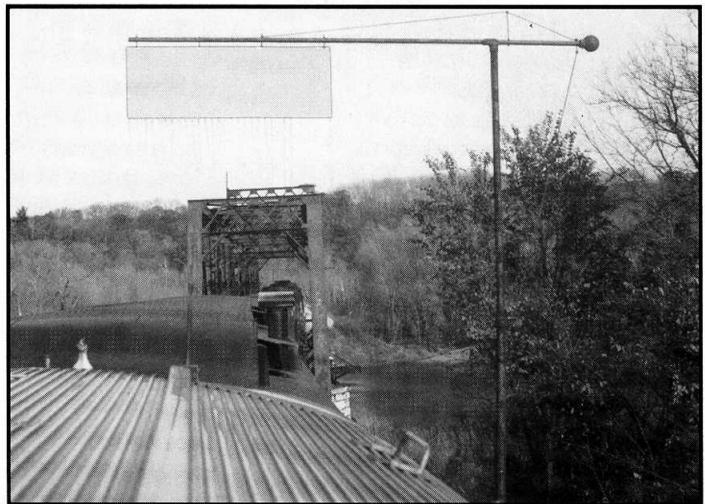
The rebuild is expected to continue through the winter, with steamup sometime in 1993. North Star Rail has indicated an interest in basing the operational engine at Jackson Street. No formal agreement has been made as of this writing.

The engine is accompanied by a Milwaukee Road baggage car. It was built in 1938 as the beaver tail observation "Earling" and ran on the Twin Cities and Midwest Hiawathas. Later it was converted to a baggage car and survived in work train service until purchased by North Star in 1992. It has since been refurbished and repainted in the original maroon and orange colors.



#261 heads for the Twin Cities. Photo courtesy North Star Rail.

# TO OSCEOLA BY DOMELINER

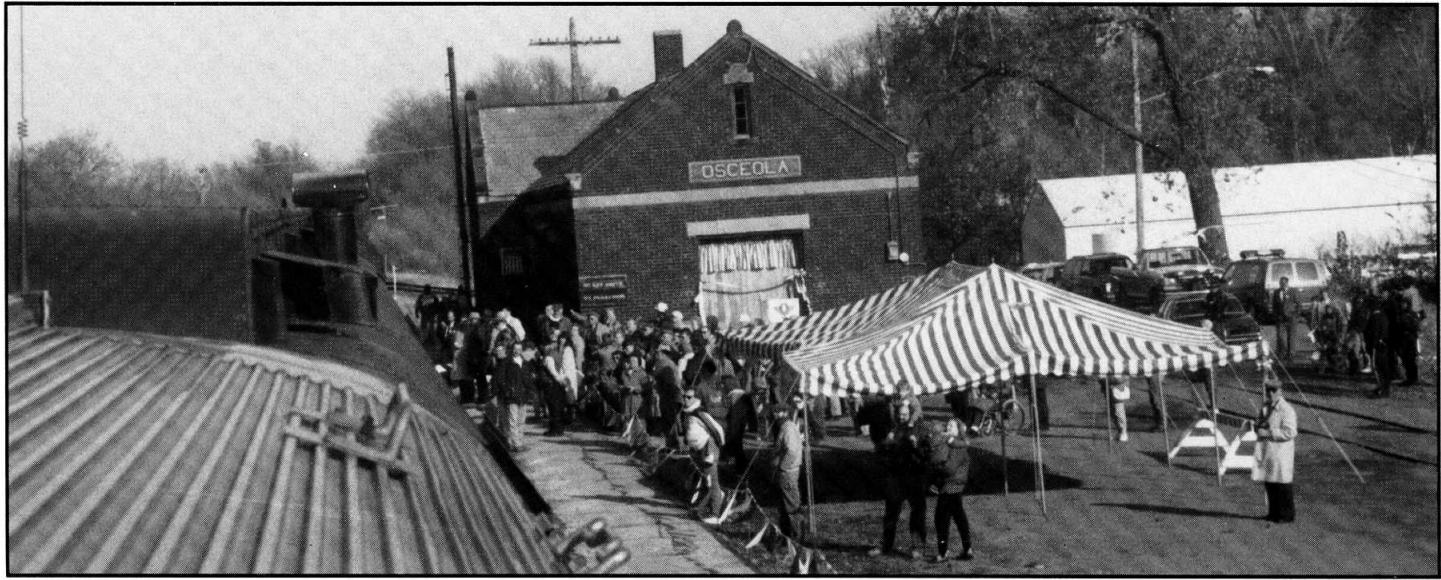


**Top Left:**  
Cruising along the  
Minnesota side.

**Top Right:**  
Crossing the St. Croix.  
The tell-tales are  
museum pieces in  
themselves.

**Center:**  
Winding along the  
Wisconsin bluffs.

**Bottom:**  
The big arrival in  
Osceola for the  
dedication ceremonies  
Aaron Isaacs photos.



# ALL ABOUT OSCEOLA

*There is much to know about the Soo Line's original railroad in the St. Croix valley. The features that follow trace the history of the line through newspaper accounts, original construction photographs, company records and the recollections of railway employees.*

*Many thanks are due to some people who made this issue possible. Patti Isaacs drew the map that appears on the inside front cover. She and her company, Parrot Graphics, donated it to the museum.*

*John Cartwright and the Northstar Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society graciously loaned their album of original Soo Line photos that show the line's construction and early operation.*

*Finally, Vicki Jensen, Linda Jensen Gordon and Ward Moberg of the Osceola Historical Society provided a wealth of local material.*

## THE RAILROAD HISTORY OF OSCEOLA

**-Ward Moberg**

**Editor's note:** This article combines two articles by Moberg that first appeared in the Dalles Visitor in 1986 and the Osceola Sun in 1987.

### Building the Line

Minneapolis investors raised one million dollars to finance the Soo Line, and three-fourths of that came from flour millers. The new railroad did not ask for government land grants. However, the Village of Osceola spent \$1806 to purchase a right of way through town.

The Osceola community felt the economic impact of the rail construction. Ties and pilings were in demand and the construction workers needed food and housing.

Retired steamboat captain William Kent, operator of a general mercantile store in town, won a contract in December 1886 to furnish several thousand ties. The contractor for the bridge advertised for a "large amount of piling". In the winter, farmers hauled the piles to Cedar Bend.

A number of shanties for the men were built near the construction sites. Local entrepreneur Charles Peaslee sold 20,000 feet of lumber for that purpose to the crew working along the river bluffs. Lumber for the housing at the Cedar Bend bridge came from Marine. The teamsters hauling rock for the piers boarded in Osceola and stabled 12 teams there.

Local stores and farmers supplied food. They were cautioned about their prices: foodstuffs should be as "cheap as in Minneapolis". Terms should be "cash and no dicker".

Bits and pieces of information in the Press describe a large work force.

200 men worked along the river bluff at the beginning of January 1887. In mid-March, after the seasonal work of cutting timber was completed, more men arrived "looking for work on the railroad". By the first of April the crew numbered 500.

Another Osceola steamboat captain, Oscar F. Knapp helped engineers select the best place on the channel for a draw. Construction on the bridge piers began in December 1886 and continued for nine months. "The longest piling that can be obtained" was driven into the ground as a foundation for the stone. Rock for the piers was shipped by rail from Mankato to Franconia and later to Taylors Falls. From these points teams hauled it on sleds using the frozen St. Croix River as a road. Sledding stopped

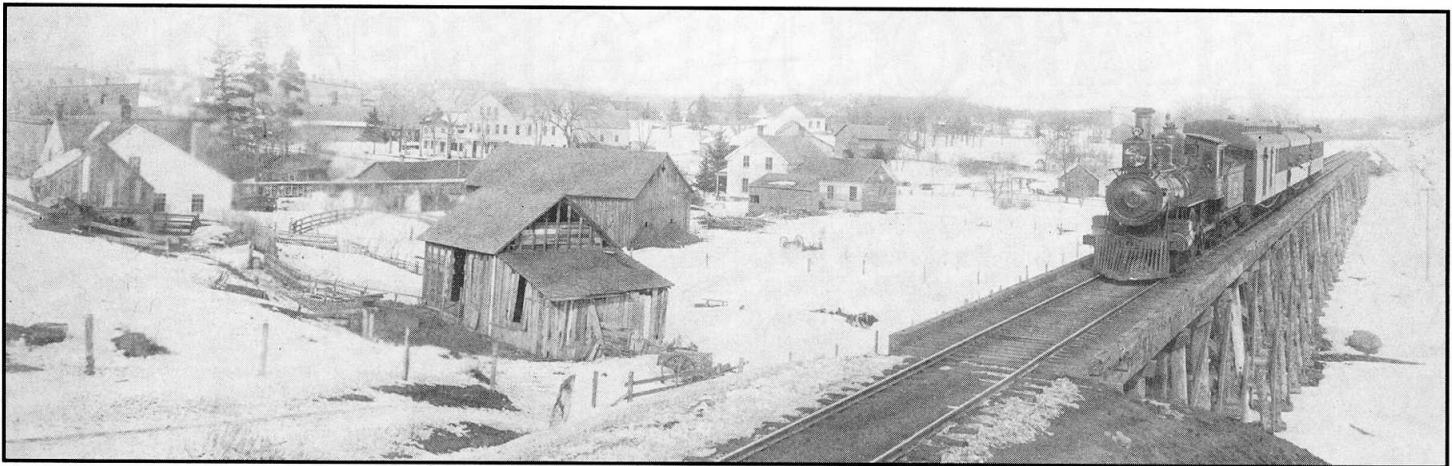
in early March when the ice was judged unsafe for hauling. After the river opened for navigation the Osceola-built steamer Cleon pulled barge loads of rock from Taylors Falls to the bridge. By the end of May the piers and the woodwork, except for the main span, were finished. Specifications called for an iron span with a draw "to let boats pass".

In September Captain Charles Knapp received the job of operating the drawbridge and planned to move his family down to a house located on the Wisconsin side of the bridge.

The Valley Standard reported at the end of September that the iron for the draw across the St. Croix had arrived and would be placed in position immediately. A week earlier the Press noted that the crew "to put



**The Soo Line picnic pavilion atop the bluff by the Osceola depot appears to have been built to a standard depot design. Osceola Historical Society collection.**



A Soo passenger train enters Osceola from the east in 1887. The trestle has been considerably shortened and now spans Hwy. 35. Soo Line photo, NRHS Northstar Chapter collection.

in the iron span draw" came to town. A temporary wooden draw was put in place earlier in order not to delay the completion of the rail line (see photo on page 19).

The preparation of the cuts and ledges along the river bluff took a large number of men. They were "busily engaged in digging, cutting and blowing away obstructions." In one blast thirty charges of dynamite "sent a large piece of bluff down the bank".

The bluff was not always the only thing to go down the bank. A large number of dump cars on makeshift tracks were used to move dirt. In March, five loaded cars ran off the track and careened 35 feet to the bottom of the bank. The wreck happened near Butternut Falls and "badly damaged" the cars.

In another accident a man who prepared the dynamite for blasting was killed by an explosion below Butternut Falls. Several hundred yards away from the rest of the crew and out of their sight he was warming the dynamite cartridges with "hot sand" when the accident happened. Several months later Captain Oscar F. Knapp invented a safer device for warming the cartridges which included a thermometer.

On the difficult grade near Mineral Springs a perpendicular cliff of 65 feet had to be removed (see photo on page 22). Men protected themselves from falling over the edge with safety lines, "a novel sight to watch."

Blasting to the east and at times in town was dangerously close to homes. One charge "across the creek" threw "stumps and dirt" over houses. "One

stump struck the roof of Tobe Delong's house scattering the shingles and another broke Lutz's fence down." In July the dynamite blasts on the hillside behind Rudow's Millpond were judged the "heaviest of the season and gave a general shaking up of the town."

In spite of it all the Press could report at the beginning of August the "welcome whistle of the Soo construction train on the Osceola prairie."

The Marine Lumber Company delivered the lumber for the overhead railroad bridge in town at the end of May, but it was the end of July before carpenters went to work. Two weeks later the structure was "well braced". A few days later the carpenters put in place the timbers that covered the road.

Invariably railroad workmen ran



The approaches to the drawbridge were once on trestles, now filled. Soo Line photo, NRHS Northstar Chapter collection.



The railroad was ready for service before the drawbridge was assembled. In order to begin service, the iron draw was left in the open position and a temporary wooden draw (at left) was built to span the river's main channel. Trains passed through gaps in the truss and crossed the iron span at a right angle. Soo Line photo, NRHS Northstar Chapter collection.

afoul of the law. They spent time in the three saloons situated along the frozen river between Stillwater and Osceola, "far enough apart to divide the distance so that it is not too far between drinks but just far enough." The first one out from Osceola must

have been on the ice just above the Cedar Bend bridge. In February contractors Langdon and Co. entered a complaint in court in Osceola against **John Gray and Warren Wiley** for selling liquor at their saloon on the ice without a license. They pleaded guilty

and paid a \$50 fine plus costs.

"Five dollars and costs" was the fine imposed on one of two workmen who found themselves in court in Osceola. One man had "borrowed" a coat from a fellow worker and had the cheek to wear it in town. The victimized party "frowned on that type of borrowing" and had the "borrower" arrested. Another went "through his comrade's satchels" one Sunday morning. He made off with a watch and clothing but was arrested by Sheriff Barry and tried.

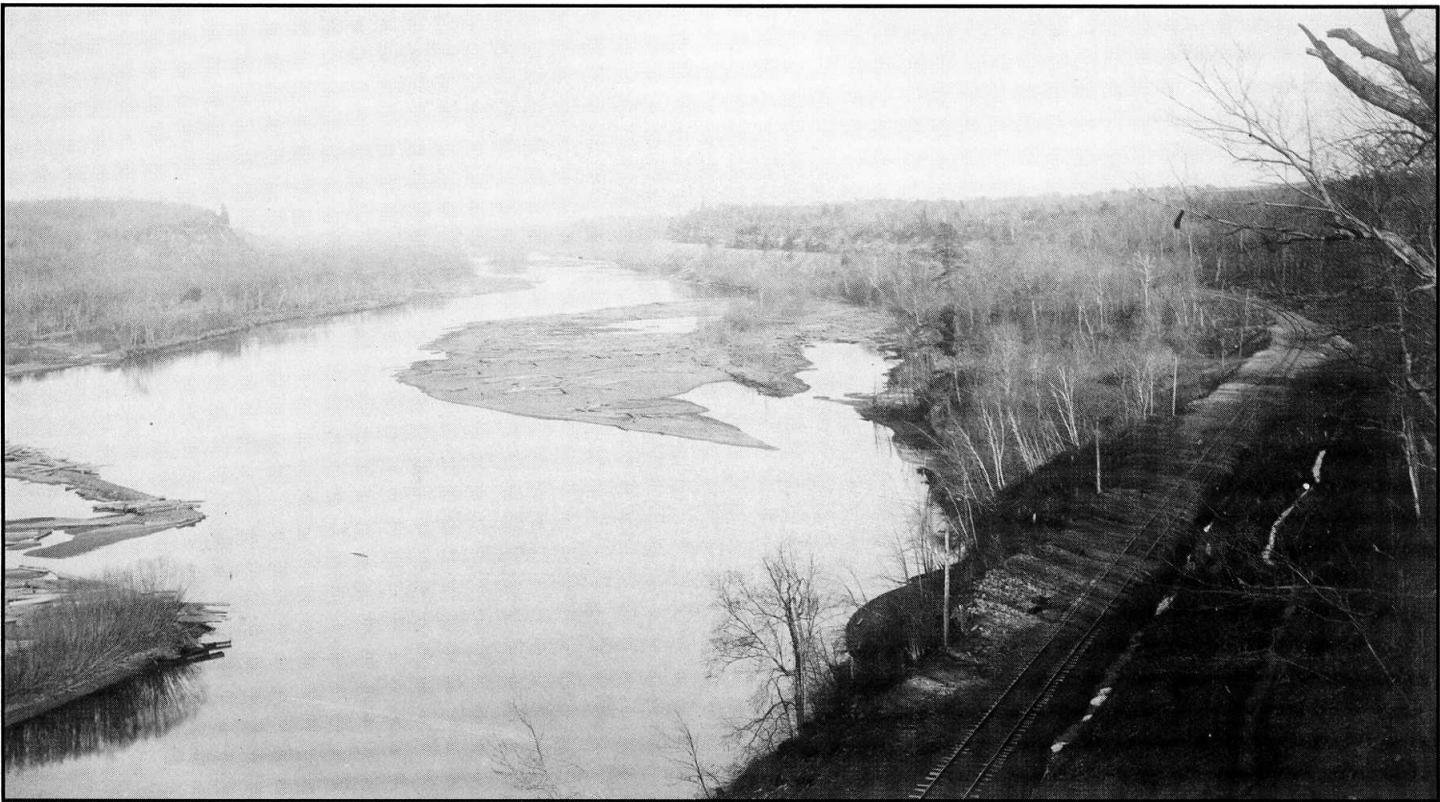
Two strikes occurred during the same week in April 1887 but they were too small to be of any consequence and were quickly put down. In one incident sixteen men tried to prevent the majority of the men from working. It was an "animated strike" for higher wages near Cedar Bend. Four men on another crew struck for the same reason. All of the strikers were discharged.

Osceola received its rail link to the outside world on Sunday August 21, 1887, when a Soo Line construction train steamed into town.

It was a festive occasion and the Polk County press reported, "Old men and old women leaped for joy; young men and maidens gaily tripped the streets. Everybody was



One of two large trestles on the Minnesota side, this one spanned a ravine north of Otisville. Soo Line photo, NRHS Northstar Chapter collection.

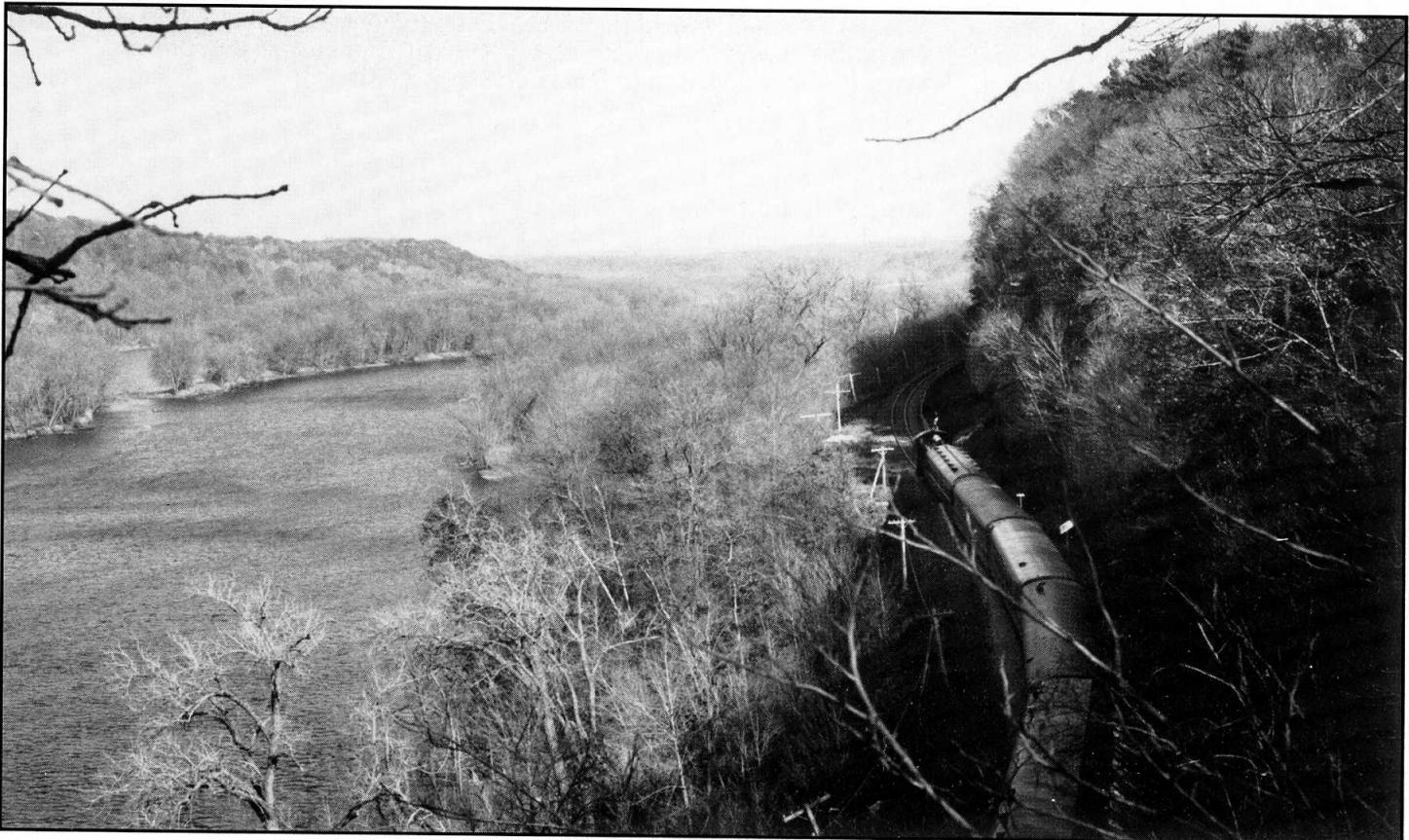


This is the same stretch of track viewed from opposite directions. Top: Looking north from atop the Cedar Bend bluff. Bottom: Looking south toward the Cedar Bend bluff. Soo Line photos, NRHS Northstar Chapter collection.





Looking north from "Lime Kiln Cliff" in 1887. The kiln cooked limestone mined from the bluff into lime that was shipped out by steamboat. The railroad cut through it and put it out of business. Soo Line photo, NRHS Northstar Chapter collection.



The same location, 105 years later. The perspective is different because of a telephoto lens. Trees and brush have grown back to such an extent that photographing from the Wisconsin bluffs is almost impossible. This shot required walking a mile and climbing a tree. Aaron Isaacs photo.

happy." People had watched the progress of the track layers coming from the east the whole day.

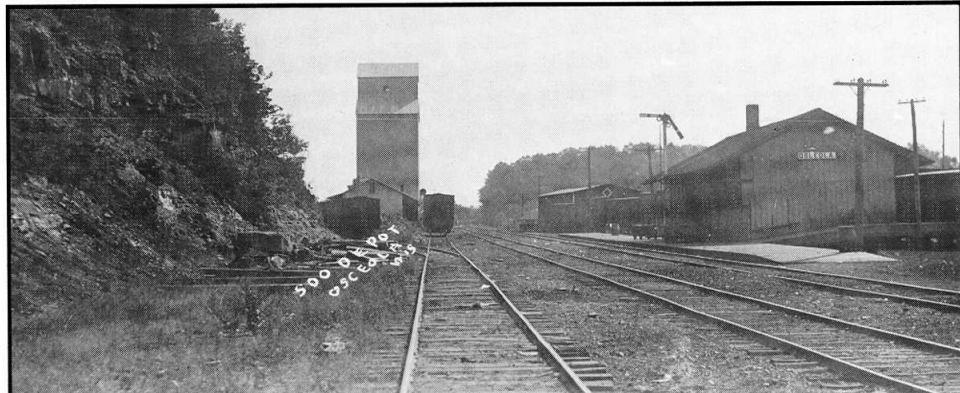
The first passenger train arrived from Turtle Lake three days later. Track crews kept working to the west to Cedar Bend on the St. Croix River while their counterparts from Minneapolis worked eastward; they met on the Cedar Bend Bridge on September 2nd.

A group from Osceola walked the five miles to the bridge that rainy afternoon to witness the meeting of the iron. Freight trains from Minneapolis started regular runs through Osceola immediately. The whistle became a "familiar sound" and "two trains before breakfast is a common occurrence now," said the Press.

Dignitaries who rode the first passenger train from Minneapolis on September 10th included Gen. William D. Washburn and John S. Pillsbury, the "principal promoters and stockholders" of the railroad.

That train was the beginning of regular passenger service. Passengers boarded at Osceola at 7 AM and arrived at Minneapolis at 9:05 AM. The return train left Minneapolis at 4:10 PM. A one way trip cost one dollar. If you wanted to go to St. Paul, a connection had to be made with the St. Paul & Duluth at Bald Eagle Junction.

Between September 12th and October 15th the people in Osceola bought 335 tickets, almost 150 more



By 1911 an elevator and another building have appeared east of the depot, and the water tank seems to be gone. Osceola Historical Society collection.

than any of the nearby communities.

The new station was completed in October, along with a water tank and grain elevator. The village opened a road 66 feet wide to the depot from the "highway leading south."

A place to store grain was not an afterthought, but signifies why the Soo Line was built in the first place. Washburn and Pillsbury, among others with a Minneapolis milling interest, had a practical reason for building it. The other railroads charged more for shipping grain to Minneapolis than to Milwaukee and Chicago. The intent of the new rail-road was to reach eastern cities like Boston and New York by way of Sault Ste. Marie and Canada.

#### The Later Years

The depot served the community until 1890. In that year a westbound freight hit a parked engine and on

impact the freight cars from the westbound train derailed into the side of the depot. The train crew managed to jump to safety and station agent Hoxsie Stone was safe on the other side of the building. A longtime resident says that the yellow frame building was repaired sufficiently to be used until 1916 when the present depot was built of red wire cut brick with sandstone trim. At the time it was considered "modern in every way" with two waiting rooms, a heating plant and water.

There had been flour mills in Osceola as early as 1852. When the railroad came the Osceola Mill & Elevator Co. had already been in business three years.

Osceola became a staging area for shipments in carload lots. According to local historian Grace Pilgrim Bloom, the Osceola Mill & Elevator specialized in "mixed car business, that is selling to individual dealers in combination of perhaps 500 bushels of oats or shelled corn or both, 40 or 50 barrels of patented flour, the rest of the car made up of mill products (such as) bran, middling and low grade flour, the so-called "red dog" with some poultry scratch feed, if desired."

The Mill & Elevator went bankrupt when a shipment of 17 cars of rye flour was rejected on a technicality. It ended up on a siding on the east coast and couldn't be resold.

In the early years there was a market for excursion trains to Osceola. In 1891 the railroad built a pavilion on the bluff where the water tower now stands (see photo on page 17). It was the site of many picnics and dances, and the area is still referred to by some as "picnic bluff." One group of 900 came up from Minneapolis in July of 1891. A week



This view gives some idea of the construction difficulty. At Mineral Springs trestle a 105 foot deep cut was made in the rock face and the debris was used to create an 85 foot high fill. Soo Line photo, NRHS Northstar Chapter collection.

later the Soo Line had their company picnic there. The 14-car special train carried 1500 people.

At one time there were stock yards near the depot. Farmers would walk their cattle over the dusty country roads to Osceola. Driving the cows to market was quite common years ago, according to Guy Englehardt.

Before the cattle were driven to the stockyards a buyer would come out to the farm and "make the deal," said Guy. "My father sold them for so much a pound and there was a creek just a little below the depot. After being driven seven to eight miles the cattle were thirsty. But the buyer was there to make sure the cattle did not drink before they were weighed in. Five or six thirsty cows could put on several hundred pounds. The buyer did not want to purchase "watered

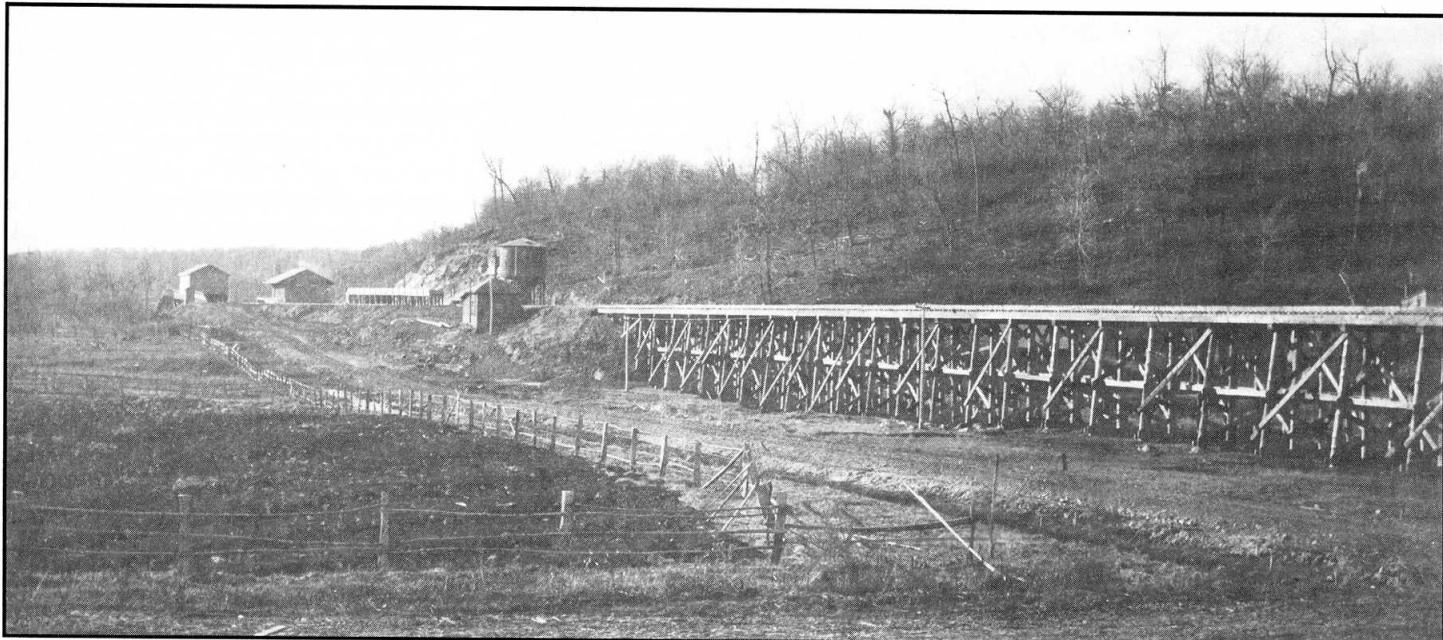
stock" and the cattle could not take a drink until after they had been weighed.

Over the years a number of railroad workers have lived in Osceola, some in the houses below the station. Mable and John Wies moved to the Osceola area in January 1942 from Lewis, WI. It was during the war and John was one of the men who maintained a 24-hour watch on the Cedar Bend bridge. "It was called the St. Croix Bridge by the railroad men," said Mable. The fear was that sabatours might blow up the bridge. "A railroad detective would come around and see if anyone was loafing on the job", said Mable. "They (the watchmen) had to be on the ball."

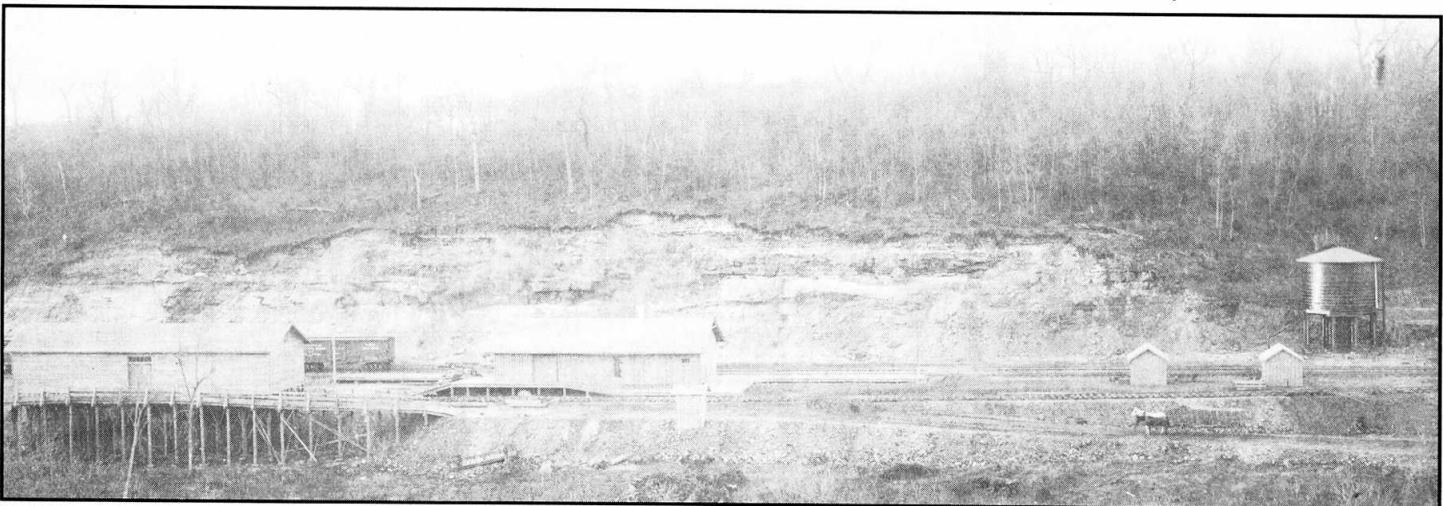
After the war ended John became the track patrolman for the bluff area. He would go ahead of every passenger train to make sure there were no

obstructions or washouts. He did this until he retired in 1959. He went out at 6 AM to check for the 6:30 train. He did the same for the afternoon trains and the 9:30 PM train.

When the Wies' first moved here they lived in a small house on the Bachman farm on the River Road; then he could drive the access road to the tracks near the bridge. Later they moved to town and Mable took the job as caretaker of the depot. She met the 6:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. trains and took the mail. She pulled the mail on one of those four wheel depot wagons with a long handle. "It was a big thing when those trains came in," said Mable. Friday nights when a number of people came home for the weekend was exciting. "At Christmas time there was also a lot of activity" she said.



Two views of the Osceola depot shortly after it opened in 1887. Soo Line photos, NRHS Northstar Chapter collection.



Herman Brocker started working as a maintenance worker at Osceola on April 8, 1927, a few years after he came from Germany. At first he ran a hand pump car along the tracks by the bluffs overlooking the river. There are a number of curves and at that time there were twenty trains through town each day. The section crew needed something they could get off the tracks in a hurry when a train rounded a bend.

"Sometimes we had a chance to get the car off the tracks," said Herman and sometimes they had to jump clear before the car was hit by a train. One time near the "ice cliff" a few months after Herman started work he had a close call. The watch of the other man on the car was off and they thought they had plenty of time to check the track before the next train. They met a train. Herman threw himself free by tipping the hand car. He landed clear of the track, but the other man landed on it. He picked up the man with one hand to take him off the track.

The train hit the car and Herman said that he can still see the wheels of the car just clearing his head as it was hurled through the air. It landed and

careened down the bank and into the river.

Herman said that on a hand car you were expected to both push down and pull up. If you only pushed down you were told there was no "piano playing" on the pump car. In the early thirties they started using motor cars along the cliffs as was done on the other sections.

All of the men who worked on the section out of Osceola that were contacted mentioned the "ice cliff" (see photo on page 26). There are springs along the bluff. The ice would build up like a volcano and spread out over the track. Walter Bohman has a picture of one of the section members getting a drink from the top of the "volcano" as the water came up.

They dumped chloride and a little salt into the top of the ice volcano and that burned a three inch hole down to the original level of the creek that ordinarily took the water away from the cliff and down into the ravine.

"This would last 24 hours," said Merrill Nehring of Nye. "It was a daily job in the winter time. The problem was that the springs along the cliff ran day and night."

The last two years Merrill worked

before retiring in 1977 he walked ahead of the freight trains about 15 or 20 minutes to check the ice and also looked for fallen rock and sand slides when part of the cliff would wash over the track. Track walkers are no longer used. There are fences along the track and if something falls down it turns the signal by the station from green to red to warn the engineer. Merrill's house is the station from Copas which he had brought to Nye and remodeled.

The railroad seems to permeate those who work on it. "I still dream about being out on the track," said Walter. When the train derailed in William O'Brien State Park several years ago it was Walter who called the dispatcher to tell him that he suspected something was wrong even though he was retired. He lives about a mile from the track west of Marine and heard the train go by around midnight. A short time later there was a sound that was not quite right and that's when he called.

Elmer Johnson was the last resident agent at Osceola. When he came to Osceola in the early sixties he was the full time agent at the depot.



In addition to the regular passenger trains, the Soo Line ran periodic ski specials to Trollhaugen in Dresser. Here 4-8-2 #4003 heads an enormous consist at Dresser. Ray Norton collection.

**The band plays as the ski train's passengers pour onto waiting buses for the trip to the slope.**  
Ray Norton collection.

In April 1968 he started dividing his time between Dresser and Osceola. He recalls spending a few hours in Osceola and the rest of the time in Dresser. By 1970 he was no longer spending any time in Osceola. After that time any freight for Osceola was handled by a traveling agent.

Osceola continues to relive the days of steam locomotives and passenger service during its annual Wheels and Wings celebration held the second weekend in September.

## STORIES FROM THE ROADMASTER

**Ralph Thorson** was a Soo Line track man for 46 years, the last 21 as a roadmaster. He was born in North Dakota and spent most of his career there, except for 1955-61, when he was in charge of the Osceola line. He returned after 31 years to be a part of the opening of the Osceola & St. Croix Valley. Appropriately, he was put to work performing the track inspection that precedes each day's operation.

Minnegazette: When did you hire on with the railroad?

Ralph Thorson: The last week in October 1929. I lived on the old homestead west of Russo, North Dakota. I hired out on this branch that ran between Drake and Bismarck. They needed a temporary employee to carry heavy snow fence panels to get ready for winter. My first job with the Soo Line was as a section laborer. I became an extra gang foreman and section foreman. After about 22 years I moved to the main line at Enderlin which was then called the Minnesota Division and I worked there as an assistant road-master. I moved to Harvey in 1951 and I stayed there as an assistant roadmaster until 1955. The job at Dresser, Wisconsin came open for bid and I continued on that job from 1955 to 1961. I lived in Dresser, in the first house directly south of the depot. In 1961 I moved to Bismarck and I stayed in service there for 13 years as a roadmaster and then I moved back to Harvey in 1974 and worked there for two years, and retired in 1975 after 46 years.



M: What was your territory?

RT: My territory was from Withrow to Dresser, Dresser to Superior and Dresser to Weyerhaeuser, including two branch lines, to Rice Lake and Ridgeland. It was called the M & D Division. The Minneapolis and Duluth Division.

M: How many employees worked for you?

RT: I had section headquarters at Osceola, Dresser, Centuria, Webster,

Danbury, Markville on the north line. Then I had section crews at Nye, Amery, Turtle Lake, Almina, Barron, Cameron and Weyerhaeuser. The section crew would be a foreman, and generally a summer-time force of three laborers. In the winter they would cut it down to one laborer. Because most of the work was shoveling snow, cleaning the switches and tending the switch lamps we couldn't renew any cross

ties. If they had a rail break clean across they'd patch it with the application of angle bars. They would just make another joint at the broken rail.

M: Did you have a heavy equipment crew that would come in if needed?

RT: The big maintenance jobs were done by extra gangs. There would be a tie renewal gang, ballast gang and a rail renewal gang. And if I remember right, in those five years I had very little of that done on the line.

M: You've been over the line and you've seen how the track is these days. Is that the same rail you had?

RT: The remaining rail here is basically the same. There's no welded rail in this area. The rail between Dresser and Amery is what they call 90-20, which runs 90 lbs. to the yard. I believe that the rail that we traveled on between Dresser and Withrow is also 90, but it's an older 90.

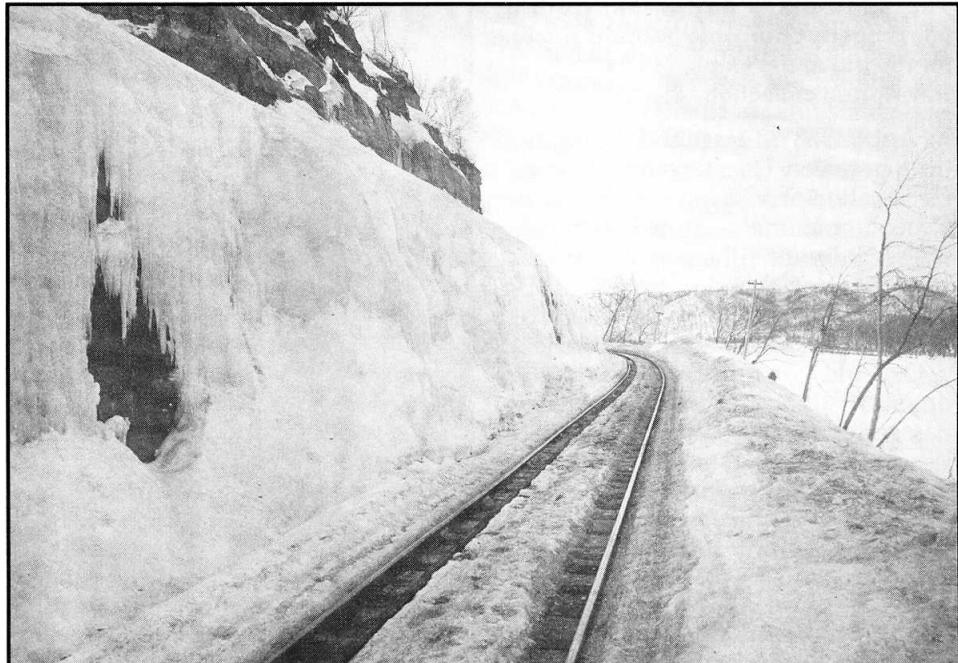
M: Did you have anything to do with bridges and buildings?

RT: No, bridges and buildings were under the supervision of the bridge and building foreman and they also had a B & B supervisor that covered a larger territory than the roadmaster. We had a responsibility to check bridges. That was an unwritten law on the railroad when we inspected track, if we saw an unusual condition it was up to us to report it.

M: Based on your experience, what should MTM expect from that rock cliff section west of Osceola?

RT: Well, you should be quite safe inasmuch as you get a clear signal when you enter it but you have to remember that grid does not protect you from wash outs. The track can be washed out and those signals will stay clear. I don't believe I ever had a washout. There were no messy rock falls while I was there, but there were small ones that sloughed off that cliff occasionally because there are trees up there that expand in the rock formation, but I think a big fall would probably be caused by an excessive amount of rain. The only trouble I had at the rock cliff was ice formations. I had a lot of ice build up, especially in a 30 or 40 below night and that water would ooze out where I would have to dynamite the ice to get clearance for the trains.

M: What sort of traffic levels did



Ice from springs in the bluff face threatened to close the line at Cedar Bend in 1888. Soo Line photo, NRHS Northstar Chapter collection.

you have on the line when you were there?

RT: I had four passenger trains a day, 7 and 8 between the St. Paul Union Depot and Sault Ste. Marie and 62 and 63 between Union Depot and Duluth. I had two time freights which ran daily. We had a way freight from Superior that tied up at Dresser and the eastbound one ran between Superior and Weyerhaeuser but it also had to service the two branch lines. I didn't have any way freight going west. The trap rock was mostly handled by the time freights. It was a different operation than you have today. No unit rock trains. In Osceola, the most important shipper was Champion Aircraft. They had a small light aircraft factory. They loaded a lot of flat cars with airplanes in commercial crates for overseas at the depot team track. Charlie Kittner, the agent at that time, was pretty proud of his airplane business. At one time we serviced the Simonson Lumber at St. Croix Falls. At Dresser, of course, the main industry was the creamery. We picked up many, many carloads of dried milk at that time. The creamery now has changed to a cheese plant.

M: Anything at Copas, Marine or Maple Island?

RT: No, they were basically abandoned stations at that time.

M: Did you still have steam when you came up?

RT: When I came there in 1955,

steam had pretty well been phased out. The coal dock and the water tank was still there but the only time we used that was for an occasional rail fans' steam engine run.

M: Do you have any feel for how much passenger business there was at the stations along the line?

RT: I used to ride the passenger trains regularly for track inspections and I would see, on the average, 5-6 passengers per station. You very seldom picked up any people at Marine because they were so close to the city that most of them would drive in. Then you'd come to Osceola. They had pretty fair passengers. A lot of them were church people, priests and nuns that would travel. They seemed to prefer the railroad for some reason.

M: What were the track speeds for freight and passenger?

RT: The top speed for the time freights was 49 mph and the passengers was 59 mph.

M: Were there standing slow orders?

RT: The area around the rock cliffs and the St. Croix River bridge was almost a permanent slow order, but much faster than you go today. I know we ran a lot faster by the rock cliffs. We probably came down to 30 mph on the bridge. I would like to put in a word or two about trains No. 62 and 63. The scheduled running time including station stops was a

mile per minute. In order to maintain that speed you would have to do over 70 mph at some point between every station. Vern Elliott was the superintendent at that time. I always was somewhat outspoken and at times I wasn't too popular on account of being that way, but I told Vern this is absolutely crazy, you can't have a mile a minute schedule including stops and his answer was, "If they can't run it that fast they can go back to running the switch engine." If you can find one of these old M & D timetables and check the schedule of 62 and 63 you'll find out that I'm not lying because I remember the conversation I had with Mr. Elliott about that.

M: Did the crews make it?

RT: They did. They'd come into the station and you couldn't see the train for the brake smoke. This sounds like an old man spreading bull but it's true. And I suppose Vern Elliott has gone to wherever old railroad superintendents go.

I used to ride in from Dresser to Union Depot with an engineer by the name of Paul Blakst, who was a close friend of mine from the west end. He was a traveling engineer at one time. I'd make this inspection trip and get down to the Union Depot, eat a small dinner at Sugar's and come back on No. 8 and have the inspection trip done in the matter of a very short time.

M: How could you inspect at that speed?

RT: I'd ride in the locomotive cab and what we were looking for mainly was line and surface. We wouldn't be able to pick up a broken angle bar or anything like that from a locomotive. That has to be done by a foot inspection, but I could get a feel of the general condition of the rail to see if there were any out of level spots. The locomotive would show that by squirming over them. You had to make these running inspections at regular intervals. It was a requirement. You had to ride it on a locomotive as well as a motor car.

M: Did you ever get high rail trucks?

RT: They kept me on the little Fairmont, one lunger or two lunger. Five years after I retired, it was a common practice to assign a high railer to each roadmaster and I think that's the most wonderful thing that

the railroad's ever done. Just think how nice it is to inspect track. If you want to look at a certain piece just get on at this crossing and go to that crossing and you're back on the highway and you don't have to interfere with traffic. And I didn't have radio communications. I went on a written line up and if that train for some reason was delayed an hour or three hours I had to sit in the woods and wait for them. I had no way of finding out where they were. I'd be stuck between stations. They were still handing up written orders they took on the telegraph wire and you had the old operators with the green eye shades and the hooks for handing up orders.

M: Was the drawbridge ever turned?

RT: Oh yes, when I was here we had to turn it every six months under federal regulations on account of the St. Croix being a navigation river. It was gasoline powered and when we turned it, of course, the section men had to undo the angle bars on each end to free it, and the B & B men, it was their duty to start the engine and turn it parallel to the stream. But it was never opened for any boats.

B: Can you recall who some of the station agents were?

RT: There were two old timers - Carl Sliper at Dresser and then we had Charlie Kittner at Osceola. They were both dyed-in-the-wool railroad men. They knew how to railroad by the book. Dresser was a place where they put up train orders so you had the agent and one operator. They were open for a 16 hour day, 8 hours per

shift. They had swing men come in on weekends to relieve them on their days off. There was no agent at Copas. Copas was almost an abandoned siding at that time, even 30 years ago. I think the Marine station was open but, don't quote me because you're getting back in the dim dark ages.

M: Do you recall any of the other long time employees?

RT: There was, of course, John Wies who was the permanently assigned track inspector for the cliffs. That was a full time job. He had to have a swing man to relieve him because the railroad would rather put a swing man on than to pay overtime. The old time section foreman at Dresser was a man by the name of Conrad Nelson and he had some very veteran section workers. I can't recall the section foreman's name at Osceola but that man was one of the best gladiola raisers in the country. He had glads that took prizes at the Minnesota state fair. The most easily remembered of the section men was Willis Reiter, who incidentally is Bob Clark's grandfather. There was another old timer by the name of George Anderson and they were basically the crew. The others were mostly part-time workers. If they needed somebody they'd put on a third man.

Then we had a man at Nye by the name of Charlie Karmen, who had a heart condition. He came into my office one day and he was just absolutely dancing on the air. He was telling me- this was in the wintertime- that he was getting ready for the



31 years after his stint as the local Roadmaster ended, Ralph Thorson revisits the Cedar Bend drawbridge. Bob Clark photo.

summer's work schedule and how he had everything planned and him and his man went down the line toward Nye. About an hour after I talked to him he died of a heart attack out there. His man came back in and we had to go out there with the motor car and push car to haul the body back so we could put it up in the ambulance and get it to the mortuary. Maybe you don't want to hear unpleasant things but unpleasant things do happen. So, that of course was the tragic end of a very good section foreman.

The one that I want to get back to is **Charlie Kittner** at Osceola. He was one of the most remarkable people that I've ever encountered on the railroad. In his younger days he was what you called a boomer. He had worked for at least one or two dozen different railroads before he settled on the Soo. Now I want Charlie's history in there because people should research a guy like that. He was a veteran of WWI and WWII, he had been in the Navy in both wars. He was a rugged looking man. And, of course, **Carl Sliper**, the agent at Dresser was a man that wanted everybody to absolutely hew to the rules. If you overstepped in any way he was right on you and he personally would take it upon himself to reprimand you. He didn't turn you into the superintendent but he'd tell you if he thought you were doing something that was contrary to the rules. He was self-appointed and he headed off a lot of trouble by doing that.

M: What was it like fighting snow?

RT: On this division, I think I snowplowed maybe once with the Russell plow. I did not consider this a heavy snow line. I came from the Dakotas where we had to fight for our lives every day in that drifting snow out there. The Russell and the rotary were common place tools where I came from but the quality of the snow is different down here. It falls and there's a lot of times you go out and you see snow caps on the fence posts and the telegraph lines, which tells you that it isn't drifting. It's falling straight down and it doesn't compact. The snow stays much looser in this area. One time they called me and said you have to send the Russell plow down from

Barron to Ridgeland. Having bucked snow with just the locomotives out west we didn't snowplow until it got six feet high. The jeep diesel is an odd piece of equipment. The nose will fill up clear to the top and create a natural wedge in front when the snow lodges in it. So I told the guys I'm not going to order the Russell plow. I rode down with them and we went through six feet of snow with that diesel. We plowed our way into Ridgeland right on time. We didn't need the plow until the snow gets to be eight and ten feet high.

M: What's the worst weather you had to deal with?

RT: Once we had an 11 inch rain in six hours on Labor Day weekend and I'm sure it was in 1958. It washed out all the trackage north of Dresser, up beyond Trap Rock. It was a big, big job because we had washouts but we had Trap Rock right there to furnish the ballast. They'd come up to the house and say how much do you think you need and they'd have their shovels going loading it. But the outstanding thing was that on that particular Sunday afternoon my wife had gone to the west coast, I think she traveled on the Northern Pacific out of St. Paul, and I was alone and I had been invited out to go to a trainman's cabin. I was just on the point of going when this storm struck and I couldn't believe the magnitude of that rain. I couldn't even get the phone to operate in that terrific lightning storm. So I walked down and I got there just ahead of No. 8. As I walked across the passing track I could see big gullies being washed out under the ties and just playing a gut hunch I held No. 8 at the depot. I took flak from the passengers, they stormed and screamed at me. I remember one man that was going to Amery and he was mad as the devil at me for delaying him. It was not considered washout territory east of Dresser, but I tried to tell them anything is washout territory in an 11 inch rain. It can washout standing still on level ground. We went out there and my feelings were justified. We could walk under the track. It was hanging six feet in the air and it took all the over burden away over the top of this culvert. Are you acquainted with the consolidated code of rules and those primary rules in the book?

M: Well, to be prepared for a train coming any direction at any time?

RT: That's one of them, but there's another one that is hard to define. I would say it's the most ambiguous rule ever invented. It says, when in doubt, the safe course must be taken. That was the rule I applied. I was very much in doubt. Of course I wasn't criticized for it because it's much better to have a train standing at the station than having it upside down in the ditch and maybe a few dead engine men and passengers. We cribbed up the washout and eased them over at about two mph and they were on their way about eight hours late. But better to be late than to be dead is my policy.

M: How mechanized was section work at that time?

RT: We were practically all hand labor. Most of our crossties were installed one at a time by the section crew. We didn't have any big mechanical gadgets like they have now where they have a hydraulic machine to push the tie out of the track and replace it. We were about as primitive as in 1887 when the road was built. Only the B & B crews had any mechanical equipment. They had a crane mounted on a motorized push car. Sometimes we were allowed to use it to lift rails onto push cars if we had a big rail changing job.

If you found a joint that was battered you had to check to see if all the bolts were tight and then you had to jack it up with a 15 ton hand jack. The first Simplex's were cast iron and they were brutes to carry, especially when you were surfacing track. You had to carry it from one spot to another. Everything was basically hand work. Average tie renewal each year would run about 150 per mile.

M: Did it make a difference if you were north of Dresser with the lighter traffic or if you were south of Dresser with the heavier traffic?

RT: Oh yes. You saw a lot more track maintenance, such as battered rails between Dresser and Withrow. The rail batter was much heavier there on account of all of the converging traffic.

M: Did you have much trouble with the ground freezing and thawing?

RT: You know, in these northern climates we have a thing in the wintertime where the track bed buckles in what you call frost heaves. They're similar to the heaves on the

highway. It would push up and be too sharp for traffic to go over it, so you would insert shims between the tie and the rail to make a long gradual tapering ramp on both sides of the heave spot. The shims were mostly made of oak wood and they were bored. They had to be the right size for the base of the rail. If it was 80 lb. you had to have 80 lbs. shims, etc. That was a big job in the winter, to make those run offs on heave spots and, of course, when the frost went out that was the first order of business in the spring to reduce or remove the shims as the frost heave went down.

M: How often would you have a frost heave?

RT: These things would occur overnight. Heave spots depend on the nature of the subgrade. If it is made out of wet clay where the water is accumulated and won't draw away, that's generally what produces a heave in the rail. Because this frost goes down maybe seven feet and it has a tendency to expand when it freezes and that pushes upward and causes these big bumps. Marshy areas are absolutely the worst because they're wet. We had a spot on the west end of the railroad that was so severe that we had to lace cross ties in between the ties that were frozen in the track to make the runnel. Can you get a picture of that? You'd take a nice sawed six inch tie and pull the spikes and you'd make sort of bridge on each side of the heave spot. The track was actually buried. It would come up about 6 inches. A lot of times trains would have to cross it at 10 mph.

M: Did you have to lay much ballast in the springtime to fill in?

RT: Yeah, reballasting was one of the big things in railroad maintenance because ballast would sink in many of these wet areas and we sometimes had maybe a half mile of track that would be patch ballasted. We called that patch ballast where you just ran in patches to repair it. If you wanted to change the surface of a long section that was called out-of-face ballasting, and that was generally done by extra gangs, with machine tampers.

The Jordan spreader was a common tool for ditching. For cleaning ditches it had the wings that you could set at an angle and it was jointed so you could follow the

contour of the ditch. If you wanted to build a new siding you could build a fill right from the track. After the side-dump cars had dropped their loads next to the track, you'd put the wing out on the Jordan spreader and you could make your grade as you went along. I wouldn't say it was very good for snowplowing on account of the blunt construction of the nose of the thing.

M: How did you cut brush?

RT: I remember the railroad from the time I was old enough to walk down to it. From 1920 to 1925 I was always observing these crews. The summertime section crews averaged a man per mile and they did everything by hand. A brush hook was an implement that looks somewhat like an ax only it was a hook type of blade that was attached to an ax handle. The idea was that you swung it this way and you lopped off the brush. You could do this to brush that was maybe as thick as your thumb. The linemen would be furnished with a chain saw for cutting brush under the telegraph line. When brush got high enough it would short out the telegraph, especially in rain storms. My first experience with the chemical train was when I was a roadmaster at Dresser. We had a contract job come up. They had high-pressure nozzles like a fire nozzle in a fire truck that would squirt this stuff clear out to the right of way fence. The train would go along at about 15 miles per hour and they just played these nozzles all the way from the track to the 50-foot right of way line. That was one of our big helps.

M: Were there wrecks in your territory?

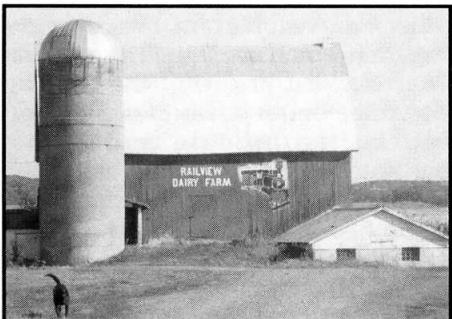
RT: Let me try to tell you about this one because it happened in recent history. A westbound time freight stopped for the signal at the Northern Pacific rail crossing at Bald Eagle and they stood there quite a while. In the meantime another westbound, I think it was the Wisconsin Central, came in. The agent tried to convey to the second train how many minutes had elapsed since the first one, but evidently they didn't understand it. In the meantime the first time freight got the green light. The engineer released the air and he was starting to latch the throttle open when BANG, on went the air. It was a long train, it was around the curve so he couldn't see what happened. He didn't realize the

other train had hit him. His comment to the fireman was, well they must have decided to cut for the crossing down there. But it was the other train hitting the caboose and it just absolutely demolished it. Two of the units tipped over on their side and one of them caught fire and, of course, all the fuel oil in it just burned the thing up completely. I remember the dispatcher ringing my phone in the middle of the night and saying, "Man, get over to Bald Eagle because we had a hell of a collision over there." When I drove over I found this splintered caboose and the units laying on their side and one of them was burning like a blow torch, but the only injury was a broken leg to the engineer on the second train.

That was a huge wrecker job. There wasn't that much track damage. I don't think they ripped up more than 200 feet of track but the equipment damage was terrible. The caboose just disappeared in a shower of red splinters. The guys in the caboose saw the other time freight approaching them and they took off over the right of way fence so they were in the clear. They knew they were going to get hit. The flagman should have hit the ties and gone back immediately when they were stopped but they figured we're going to be stopped just a few minutes so he was too close to the other approaching train to be an effective flag. In fact, when they saw the flagman they also saw the caboose at the same time.

One day we had a badly loaded car of pulp wood. It was loaded way above the top of the gondola in order to get tonnage and it happened to start unloading right in the draw bridge. These pulp wood logs came off when the train was going through there at full speed and they'd get wedged in the super structure of the bridge as they slid off. It could have been very tragic but it was funny in a way when you come back and saw all that pulp wood mangled in that bridge structure. I remember that Kittner stopped one right there at Osceola. He saw that it was starting to unload.

I had a mail crane at Maple Island that they would load up with first class mail. The hook on the RPO car would engage the mail sack. I remember one time that they were missing the mail sack. This particular crane was set in a curve. You had to



**Railview Farm borders the tracks at 248th Street on the way to Dresser.**  
Aaron Isaacs photo.

adjust the crane for a certain speed because you know how cars will lean by centrifugal force in the curve? If they're traveling faster they'll lean more. These curves were set up with super elevation for a certain speed. If you go too slow the car won't lean enough and you'll miss the bag. They wanted to shift the mail crane closer to the track. I tried to tell them that the book of standards shows you how to set it and I just couldn't get my idea across. You can't shift the mail crane closer because if you do you're going to be in trouble with the next train. They'll be running at normal speed and they'll probably hit the crane. This is a tight clearance deal and that's one thing you never see any more because the mail isn't hauled by the rails.

The president of the railroad had gotten a 1961 model Ford station wagon which was a high rail vehicle and it was Mr. McNamara's personal vehicle for track inspection. Some of the engineering department got ahold of it and several of us, including the safety supervisor, were riding it east out of Dresser early in the morning. I don't know if this was supposed to be a surprise move but for some reason they did not put this car in the lineup. So here we were zipping along at a good rate of speed and in this deep cut we met the section foreman's motor car. There was frost on the rail and when the man applied the brakes in the wagon it had no effect at all and we collided. We just shortened the wheel base on that station wagon and to top it all off it was the railroad president's private pet vehicle and we had the safety supervisor with us. It's a miracle we could go through that and still stay on the payroll.

## TOURING THE OSCEOLA & ST. CROIX VALLEY

Technically the Osceola & St. Croix Valley includes the entire 39-mile Dresser Subdivision from Withrow to Amery. This article will concentrate on the 15 miles from Marine to Dresser, where scheduled service operates.

Any reader acquainted with the Stillwater & St. Paul RR will notice some immediate differences. The S&StP is a light duty, dirt track railroad built to branch line standards. The maximum grade exceeds two percent and there are several 7.5 degree curves. It was a 25 mph railroad for its entire history.

The O&StCV was built to mainline standards. It is heavily engineered and the track is well ballasted. Passenger trains were known to hit 70 between stations. Freight trains were fast, too. In 1961, Soo time freight #19 was allowed 25 minutes from Dresser to Marine, a 37 mph average speed. The grade into and out of the St. Croix valley never exceeds .75 percent and the sharpest curve is 4.25 degrees.

Viewed in profile, the line makes a "V", with the river in the middle. In the six miles from Marine to the drawbridge, it drops 210 feet. It climbs continuously for the nine miles to Dresser, rising 250 feet.

Well engineered does not necessarily mean straight. There are 39 curves between Marine and Dresser, and the longest tangent is only about half a mile. In that distance a train makes the equivalent of two and a half complete circles. There are five bridges, including the 286 foot drawbridge. There used to be more, but three large timber trestles were filled over the years and others were shortened with fill.

The Marine depot site was never close to the center of town. It sits well up the bluff on a steep winding road. In fact, you can't see the town at all. The depot site appears to be in the middle of the forest. All that remains is the station sign where the depot stood and two yard tracks. One is used as a run-around for the engine. The other served an oil tank and is presently unused.

Just north of Marine the line crosses County Road 4 on what was originally a tall timber trestle, but is now a tunnel through the high fill. The view opens up as the line slides down the shallow bluff face through William

O'Brien State Park. It passes the station site at Copas, another place where you have to look around to find the town. The station was just south of the grade crossing.

Otisville is a mile north of the Highway 95 overpass. There are two grade crossings close together. The northerly one leads to the river. This is where the immigrants from Sweden landed in the 1850's to settle this area. There are a few homes near the tracks. Not surprisingly, this is the area that complained most about the coming of the passenger trains.

North of Otisville the line twists along the bluff base, crosses another fill that was once a trestle (see photo on page 19) and then turns abruptly onto the Cedar Bend drawbridge. The two curves at either end of the bridge are the sharpest on the line. Originally the long fills leading to the bridge were timber trestles. Train speed, 25 mph to this point, drops to 10 mph crossing the river. The slow order has nothing to do with the bridge's condition. There are often pedestrians on the bridge and the slow speed gives them time to get out of the way. A definite anachronism are the tell-tales that guard each end of the bridge (see photo on page 16). The purpose of the dangling cords was to warn any brakeman standing atop the train to duck before passing through the bridge's truss. The FRA outlawed walking on the cartops years ago, but the tell-tales remain.

The climb from the bridge to Osceola is as close to spectacular as railroading gets in the flat upper midwest. The line rides high above the river on a shelf that was blasted out of the limestone bluff face. Between mileposts 40 and 42 it is straight up on one side of the train and straight down on the other. The danger of rock falls and washouts is ever present. This is the area that required its own track inspector in Soo Line days. There is a slide fence next to the track which, if hit, triggers the isolated pair of block signals that guard the line between Cedar Bend and Osceola. However, a washout may not trigger the signals. Such was the case a few years ago when a rock train hit a washout. The crew jumped to safety but the locomotives went down the embankment all the way to the river.



Running around the train at Dresser. Aaron Isaacs photo.

Not far below Osceola is a two-story stone building that once housed the Betheria Mineral Springs bottling house, known locally as "the pop factory." Built atop natural springs, the company produced bottled water and a wide variety of naturally flavored soft drinks from 1893 to 1948. Long ago there was a station stop, spur track and water tower that held beverages awaiting shipping. The area around the building was set up as a public park. Thousands of brook trout were kept in four spring-fed ponds.

The tracks turn into a side ravine to enter Osceola. The depot still has its house track and two yard tracks. The house just south of the depot was built for the station agent and his family.

The bridge across Highway 35 was once a much longer timber trestle. For two miles east of the depot the tracks follow Osceola Creek. They pass the millpond when a spur used to lead to the Osceola Mill and Elevator Co. East of the pond is the 3rd Avenue grade crossing, followed a short time later by the switch to the industrial park spur, where the train is stored. Unlike the rest of the railroad, the spur is engineered like a narrow gauge, with a 12 degree curve on a grade.

The tracks cross the creek and 248th Street and enter open farmland, passing the appropriately named Railview Farm. The grade slackens to about half a percent, but continues its steady climb. After running diagonally across the fields and crossing two more county roads at grade, the line enters Dresser, once called Dresser Junction. Here the truncated Duluth and Sault Ste. Marie lines split at a full wye. Three miles of the Duluth

line and the St. Croix Falls branch are in place as far as Hwy. 8 and the Dalles House. Just north of town they pass the trap rock quarry where daily rock trains load in the summer. The Sault Ste. Marie line continues for 15 miles to Amery, where the Wisconsin Central delivers an occasional carload.

Dresser's depot is intact and still used by WC maintenance of way crews. Like Osceola, the house track that runs behind the depot is still there. The rebirth of passenger service has attracted attention in Dresser. A local group has received permission from the WC to repaint and staff the depot.



MRA fan trips brought steam to Dresser for the last time in the late 1950's. Bob Clark photo.

## THE DECLINE OF THE DEPOTS

The depots at Marine and Copas outlived their time by about thirty years, thanks to the life support of government regulation and an ill-advised contract that came back to haunt the Soo Line.

Between their construction in 1886 and 1930, the world changed and made country depots irrelevant. When built they were the unchallenged centers of their towns, the only gateways to the outside world. This lasted until the 1920's, when paved roads were built and auto ownership became common. Then came the great depression, and rail business dropped off the table.

### Marine

Soo Line's revenues at Marine fell 69 percent from 1929 to 1933. In 1930 the railroad petitioned the Minnesota Railroad & Warehouse Commission to replace the full time agent at Marine with a part time caretaker (also sometimes called a custodian). The building would remain open, but would lose telegraph service. Business dealings for freight would be handled by Withrow or Osceola.



**The Marine and Copas depots in 1955. Soo Line photos, Minnesota Historical Society collection.**

It could be that the first petition was a trial balloon, not meant to be serious. According to a company memo, the railroad backed down "when the people of Marine promised to discontinue their use of trucks and buses." Perhaps they actually believed that would happen.

Business continued to plummet, however, and in 1933 the Soo tried again. This time they ran into two realities that would stop them cold. In 1886 the railroad needed a right of way through town. The Village of Marine agreed to sell \$2000 worth of bonds to buy the land, part of which ran through Oakland Cemetery. In return, the Soo agreed to build and staff a depot in perpetuity. The Commission ruled that perpetuity had not expired after only 54 years and that the agreement must be honored.

Even absent the agreement, the railroad never had a chance. The monopolistic practices of the 19th century had spawned strict regulatory agencies. Never mind that the Soo Line was built to bypass other monopolistic railroads, and that trucks had become strong

competition. In a strongly worded ruling, the Commission accused the railroad of adding to unemployment, driving down property values and condemning small towns to become "ghost towns". The Soo Line had struck a nerve. Nonetheless, in 1937 it tried again. Again it lost. An internal memo concluded, "I do not believe there is any use in again trying to close Marine".

They didn't try again until 1958. According to company files now at the Minnesota Historical Society, they mounted an overwhelming case. Since the last attempt revenue had risen 80%, but agents' wages had gone up 330%. The station averaged one carloading every nine days, and one LCL (less than carload) shipment every eight days. Non-carload revenue (LCL, passengers, express and milk) brought in only \$3.60 a day. 117 passengers boarded in 1958, an average of one every three days. The station was barely breaking even.

The railroad argued that tickets could be purchased from the conductor on the train. Customers could call collect to the Withrow or Osceola agent to transact business.

Express and LCL could still be left on the platform. The section crew would place it in the depot and the customer would be notified by phone of its arrival. The depot would be kept open and heated. The custodian would spend one or two hours per day meeting the passenger trains and tending to the building. The railroad noted that already no agent was on duty for the weekend passenger trains, or at night when the time freights came through.

A public hearing was held at Marine. Eleven witnesses testified against the closing. The village attorney cited the 1886 agreement. The Commission denied the railroad's application.

The last milk was shipped from the depot in October 1959. In June 1961 the last passenger trains came off. Car-loadings slipped from 52 in 1957 to ten in 1960. The Soo Line decided to appeal the Commission's ruling, and this time they were successful. On April 15, 1961 the Marine section crew was eliminated and split between Osceola and Bald Eagle. The depot officially closed on November 1, 1961.

## Copas

It's unusual that Copas even had a depot, and it's remarkable that it remained in service for 74 years. Copas, with less than 100 residents, is only two miles from Marine, which has about 500. Normal station spacing would have been every 5-10 miles.

Copas lost its agent in favor of a part-time custodian prior to World War II, probably during the depression. Even that was more expense than Copas deserved. The Soo Line applied unsuccessfully to the Railroad & Warehouse commission in 1938 and 1941 for permission to eliminate the custodian and close the depot permanently.

Typically during the heavy regulation era, the Commission assumed that any loss of traditional service was against the public interest. The red ink had to be flowing heavily to get a favorable ruling. After the 1941 application failed, an internal Soo Line memo groused that the Commission based their opinion on a recent earnings upturn caused by six carloads for a road building project.

Rail business exploded during the war and the need to close Copas probably lost its urgency. After the war, however, the revenue slide resumed. In 1949 the railroad tried

again. 93 passengers used the depot in 1948 and 29 carloads of freight were handled, but few were originated. Handling this business from Marine would have been no great inconvenience. Overall, however, the place turned a profit. The Commission denied the application.

Stuck with the custodian, Soo management could at least minimize her hours. This was the subject of a flurry of memos in 1951. One dated July 3, 1951 says, "The Custodian costs us \$60.00 a month, and she performs no service whatsoever, so far as I can learn. Ask her how she can put in two hours per day when she doesn't meet (trains) 7-8, handle way freight, nor take care of the fires at the station."

Although there is nothing in the file, it appears that an official was dispatched to talk to the custodian, who turned out not to be the deadbeat headquarters suspected. An August 13th memo instructs the custodian to not meet trains 7 and 8, which she had previously been accused of not doing. Presumably this would improve the railroad's financial statement by \$30 a month.

The sharp-penciled attempt at cost containment backfired. When no passenger flagged trains 7 and 8, which was most of the time, the mail sack was simply thrown out the door. The Post Office didn't appreciate the

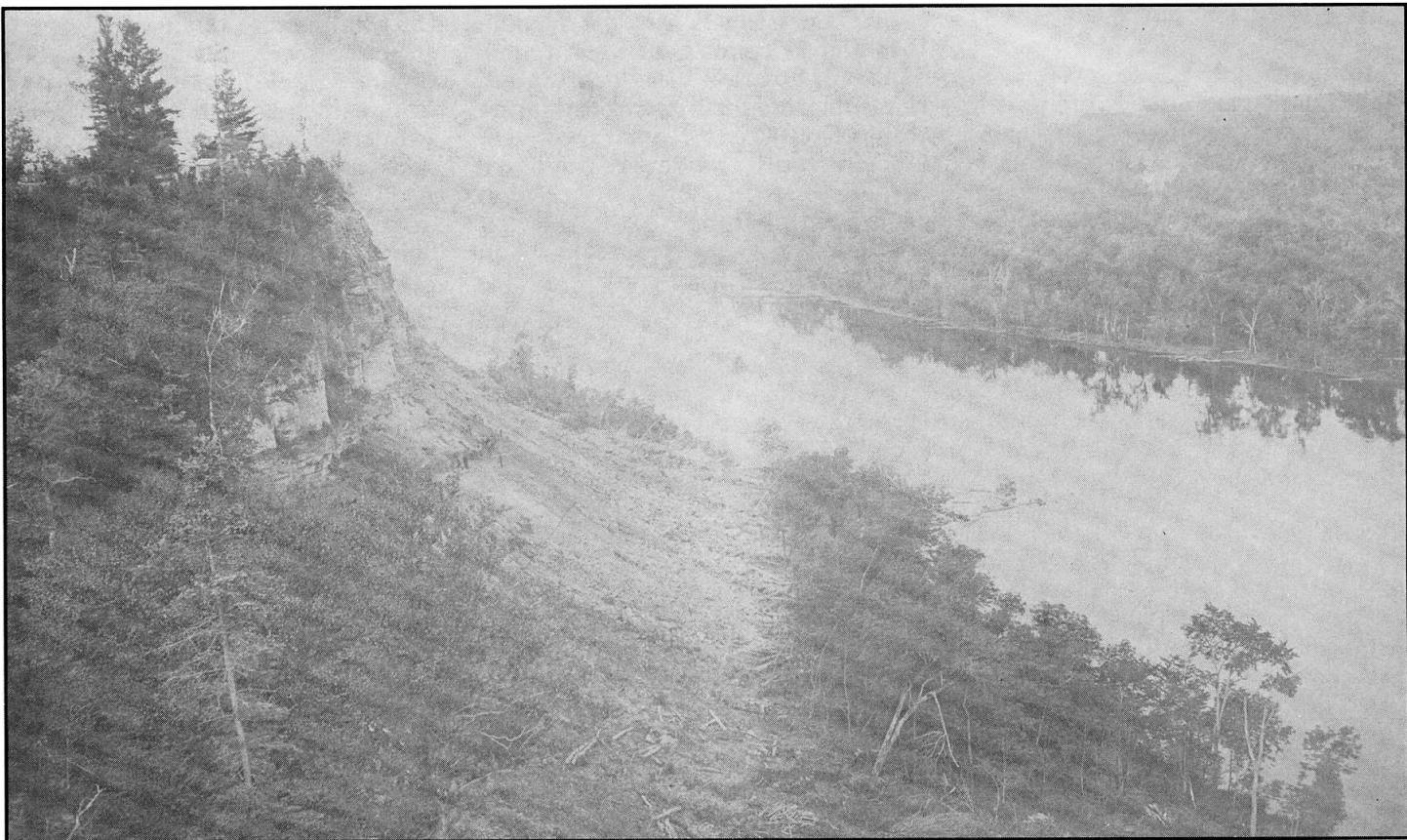
U.S. Mail sitting unattended on the ground and complained to the Soo Line. Back then railroad managements were not known for admitting mistakes or explaining decisions to subordinates. On August 30th a tersely worded memo instructed the custodian to meet trains 7 and 8.

Sometime during the fifties, all mail, express, passengers and LCL was shifted to Marine, presumably to make a stronger case for closing Copas. In January 1959, a group of memos suggests that the railroad thought it could partially get around the Commission by cutting the custodian but not closing the depot. The custodian was let go on January 31st. Perhaps they got caught, because the custodian was put back to work on May 25th.

Apparently mail handling at Copas had resumed for a while, because a memo says it ended again on June 20, 1959. It also instructs train 63 to stop at Marine because the Copas mail made the bag too heavy to be caught on the fly.

Back went the Soo Line to the Commission in 1960. Carloads had dropped to seven in 1959, with none originated. This time the approval was given. The Copas depot closed on October 10, 1961.







**How to build a railroad through difficult terrain. These before and after views were taken a year apart from Mineral Springs cliff. Soo Line photos, NRHS Northstar Chapter collection.**

**Rear Cover: Little train in the big valley, viewed from the Minnesota side. Aaron Isaacs photo.**







# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

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August 2021

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